

A girl's wanderings in Hungary

H. Ellen Browning


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To

J. H. Robinson

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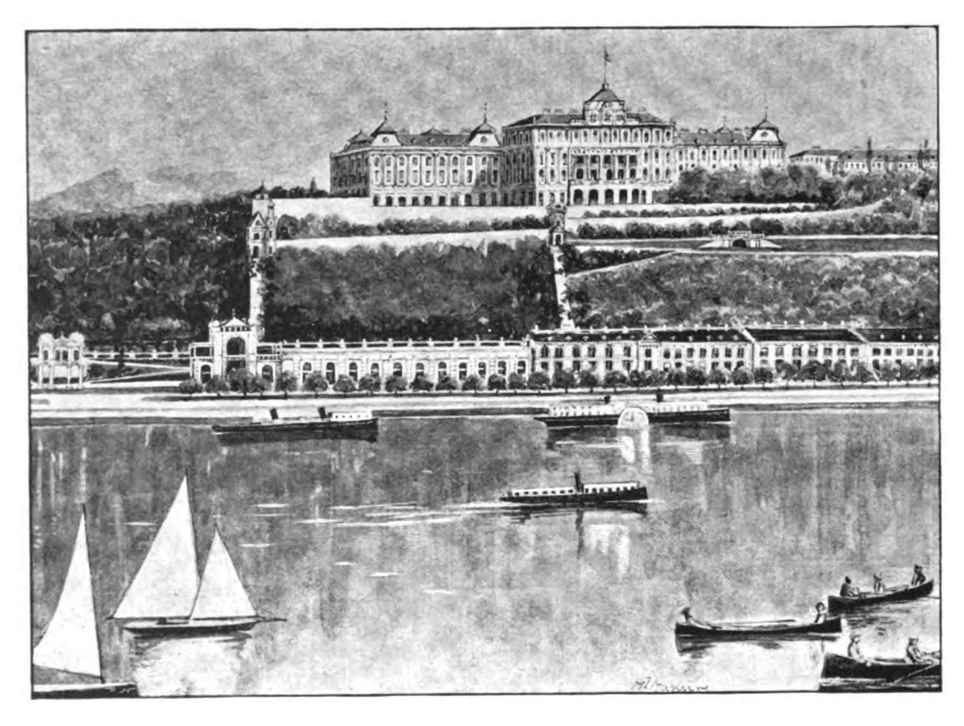
with best wishes

from W. Millar.

—

London
May 5. 1877.

A GIRL'S WANDERINGS
IN HUNGARY



ROYAL CASTLE, BUDAPEST

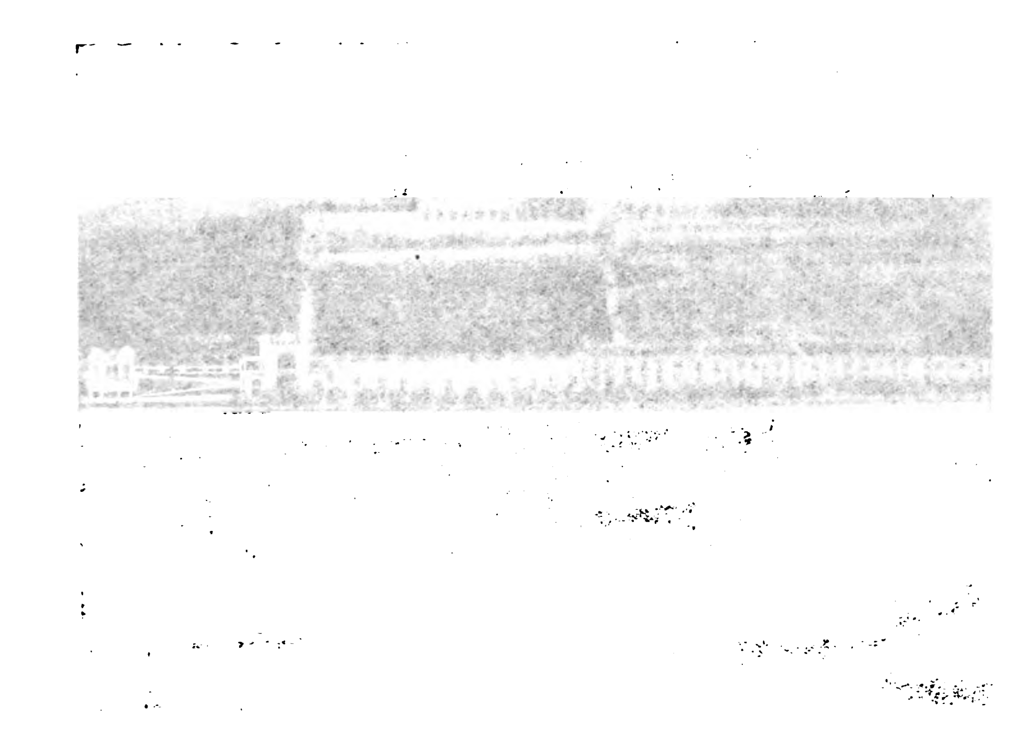
A GIRL'S WANDERINGS IN HUNGARY

BY

H. ELLEN BROWNING

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LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
LONDON, NEW YORK, AND BOMBAY
1898



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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

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DEDICATED

TO

MY HUNGARIAN FRIENDS

PREFACE

To begin with, let me confess that I belong to the category of 'mouse-screeching' women; though I wear cloth knickers under my gown and feel equally contemptuous towards an 'hysterical female' and a dowdy *bas bleu*. *Their* day is over! I love the sea, and the mountains, and the frank 'natural-ness' of the peasantry, but garlic and drunken men both disgust me. Swearing frightens me, particularly when there's anything 'bluggy' about it. It turns me instantly into a mass of shivering goose-flesh: perhaps it's the tone that does it, quite as much as the words.

I adore delicately-put compliments, and object to being considered man's equal, preferring to remain—his superior. Dancing is a delight to me anywhere—except in a London drawing-room. Reading, riding, and hockey are my favourite pastimes; *writing* is henceforward to be my profession. I am a devoted disciple of my distant kinsman Robert Browning, and *l'Art pour l'Art* is my ideal—but not in the Zola-esque sense of the phrase.

I must beg, therefore, to emphatically disclaim any partisanship of any kind. In writing this book I have merely endeavoured to describe faithfully what I did, saw, and felt, during my wanderings in Hungary, and it must not be looked upon either as a scientific book of travels, or a contribution to the eternal 'Sex-question.' Nor is it full of adventures and hair-breadth escapes. Things of that sort don't fall to the lot of a nineteenth-century girl, even at the other end of Europe.

My religion is 'cosmopolitan,' my sympathies are broad, my politics are a liberal Conservatism, and my curiosity is insatiable. I am devoured by an overwhelming desire, not only to do and see everything, but also to *experience* everything and feel it as others feel it. 'Put yourself in his place' has been my motto, often unconsciously acted upon, and it has taught me much in the way of that Charity which suffereth long and is kind.

H. E. BROWNING.

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GIRL'S WANDERINGS IN HUNGARY

CHAPTER I

How and why I went there—What the Viennese told me about Hungary and the Hungarians—My impressions of Vienna—Strauss, the Waltz-king—Coffee à la crème—Madonnas and Mädeln.

SHALL I ever forget the delightful sensation of finding myself alone in a country where I knew absolutely no one, and could not speak a single word of the language? As far as Vienna I had enjoyed the cultivated companionship of a high-placed Englishman and his wife, whose long residence in the gay Austrian capital had naturally imbued them with a good many Austrian prejudices. They looked upon Hungary as 'the end of the earth,' and the Hungarians as a nation of 'barbarians.' They also wondered greatly what could possibly induce me to go a step beyond bright, beautiful Vienna, with all its fascinations of Art, Music, Society, and life in general. Both of them were very kind, very polite, very helpful. They gave me lots of advice, changed my money for me, looked after my luggage, saw that I had plenty to eat and drink on

my way, and gave me as much information about the Magyars and Magyarland as they were able; but beneath all this veneer of kindness ran a strong under-current of strong disapproval. 'What an eccentric young person!' 'What can her people be thinking of to allow it?' were the thoughts evidently echoing through their minds, even whilst they tried to help me. Inwardly this amused me. I have always been of an independent turn of mind, and I never could see why a well-brought-up girl should not be allowed exactly the same liberty of action that is accorded to her brothers—in fact to every young man in every grade of life; but, of course, it is useless trying to make people, who are still held in thrall by the 'good, old-fashioned notions,' see this side of the question. I could have given them some very pertinent reasons for my journey, but I didn't. After studying hard, and passing (with great success) a stiffish University examination, I had lost my dear father, to whom I was devotedly attached. This combination of circumstances had nearly succeeded in destroying my health for ever. Month after month passed, and I was gradually sinking into a state of nervous invalidism that threatened to incapacitate me for life. Thorough and complete change of scene and of daily life, and a total cessation of brain-work, was the only remedy advocated by the medical faculty. So then I took the matter into my own hands. The family finance-minister easily decided that there were funds for one to go a-travelling, but not for two. I had plenty of courage. Through a friend I could get introductions to some people in Hungary; so to Hungary I would go. It was a country of which, beyond the mere name, very

little was known in Western Europe. A visit there would enable me to extend my knowledge of geography and ethnology in a practical manner. Everything and everybody would necessarily be strange and un-English, therefore it would be just the place in which to recover 'tone.' Body and nerves might 'convalesce' at leisure, whilst I studied new phases of human nature, and grew young again. It's wonderful how old you can feel at twenty-three if anything happens to crush the vitality out of you, isn't it? The Sun-god has always been much worshipped by me, but just at that period of my life he seemed a very cruel and unfeeling deity, for he actually went on shining, regardless of the fact that I, one of his most ardent devotees, moaned broken-hearted over what appeared to me a blank future.

But, *tout passe, tout lasse*—even sorrow. There is a marvellous power of recuperation in human nature, for which those who are wise feel unutterably thankful. If it were not so, where would impressionable people, like myself, for instance, be? Nowhere—just simply nowhere. We should burn ourselves out in a very short space of time, and 'our place would know us no more.' We should 'fret and fume our little part,' and then make our exit off the stage of life before we had well realised our entry upon it.

On reaching Vienna I drove straight to the Hotel Meisl und Schadn in the Kärtnerstrasse, drank a cup of delicious coffee with whipped cream floating on the top of it, crunched up a couple of crisp little golden *Semmeln*, and then lay down to have a good nap.

It was at 6.0 A.M. on a soft, fresh September morning that the fast train from Cologne steamed into the big station at the terminus of the Elizabeth-Bahn.

After my luggage had been obtained from the Customs and piled on to the box of a victoria, I took my seat beside the roll of rugs, and off we trotted behind a pair of 'springy' little horses towards the hotel. It is a fairly long drive. The early sunshine was delicious, and I thoroughly appreciated it and my surroundings. Indeed, I began to revive from that moment. The Viennese are decidedly 'early birds,' but whether they catch many 'worms' is more than I am capable of deciding. The streets were all alive with pedestrians, even at that hour. Bakers, milkmen, servant-girls, peasants, scavengers, water-carters, and market-people with baskets, trucks and wagons, besides numerous victorias similar to the one I sat in, conveying passengers with piles of luggage to and from the various stations, for nearly all the fast trains arrive and depart either between 6.0 and 7.0 A.M. or about 10.0 P.M. By the way, unless you are endowed with limitless patience, or supplied with an armful of deeply enthralling literature, never be persuaded to travel by what is called *Personen-Zug*. It sounds all right, and it's cheaper by a few guldens, but—its pace is snail-like. Its driver has absolutely no conception of the meaning of the proverb that I once heard translated by a Dutchman at Antwerp as: 'times ish monnies.' It stops at every single station for no other earthly reason, apparently, than to permit the guard and engine-driver to get off and spend a quarter of an hour comfortably chatting over the daily paper with the station-master, or cracking jokes with any odd loiterers who happen to be about.

I hate Baedeker a few degrees worse than Murray, so I never use either. They always make the most beautiful places seem like items classified and ticketed

in a museum, and I am so Goth-like by nature as to detest museums—except as places to sit and rest in on a hot day. For a whole week I just roamed about, seeing anything and everything that took my fancy, from Our Lady of Loretto—the black Madonna—in St. Michael's Church, and Murillo's Conception in the Liechtenstein Palace, to the royal stables, the Burg-Musik and the Gloriette at Schönbrunn. I grew to love the old Stephans-Dom; and the graceful Gothic beauty of the Votiv-Kirche delighted me. The dazzling wares in the jewellers' and fancy shops on the Graben and in the Kärtnerstrasse attracted my attention quite as much as the white-capped nurse-maids, the blue-clad policemen with drooping feathers in their hard felt hats, and the brilliant uniforms of the numberless regiments who seemed to be constantly marching, or changing guard, or patrolling, all over the city, at any and every hour of the day. When at last I stepped into my train and mentally bid adieu to civilisation, I already felt centuries younger than I had done two short weeks before, as the white cliffs of England had receded from my view. In Vienna, everybody seems to be always singing, laughing, dancing, whistling or chatting whenever and wherever you see them, and their gaiety is infectious. I began by watching them with grave, lack-lustre mien, and a sense of unutterable apartness, but ended by joining in the universal bubble of gay laughter around me. 'Impressionableness' has its advantages as well as its disadvantages. Consequently, when I crossed for the first time the Hungarian frontier, my mind was full of a delightful, indescribable feeling of expectation. As a matter of fact, I never had any hair-breadth escapes or thrilling adventures there, but a land of 'barbarians' is

a land of fascinating possibilities. You can never be sure what will happen next. Had it not been for that healthful week in Vienna, I might have failed to appreciate my first entry into Hungary. Things and people wear such a different aspect when they fall 'flat' on a dull, dead level of sickly indifference.

CHAPTER II

My first plunge into barbarism—Tea à la Pozsony—A courteous guard—Nyék station—My arrival at Pázmánd—Glimpses of life there—Maddalena—'The Brown Hen'—A Csikos encampment—An informal marriage—Magyar pigs—All Souls' Day.

WE reached the line of demarcation between the two kingdoms at Pozsony (Pressburg), once the capital of Western Hungary, in the days when Kolozsvár was the metropolis of the eastern portion. It is supposed to be an interesting old town, but, never having set foot in it, I cannot speak from experience. The station, with its polyglot crowd, is certainly most interesting to an observant foreigner. Indeed, if you want to get out of yourself and into somebody else (which, by the way, is an impossibility, because one's inner-consciousness will insist on asserting itself at the most unexpected moments) you can manage to do so better in Hungary than in any other country I know of—at present. One thing that I distinctly remember about Pozsony, is that in the *Restauration* they make the tea with lukewarm water, but they put plenty of cream into the excellent coffee. The train accommodatingly waits twenty minutes there to enable you to partake of breakfast. It was at Pozsony, too, that I shocked the waiter by asking for a second 'porzion' of coffee and rolls. He brought it to me dubiously and with a sad expression on his speaking countenance, as though it cut him to the quick to see

any young lady with so unladylike an appetite. In those days my knowledge of German was, to say the least, extremely scrappy, though I could speak French fluently enough—considering my nationality. The English tongue does not seem to lend itself readily to foreign pronunciations somehow.

Of the Magyar language I had never heard a syllable, not even the alphabet. The number of consonants used together, added to the abnormal length of many of the words I saw written up on the station-walls, rather confounded me. Indeed, it was several weeks before I could even distinguish where one word ended and another began. This explained itself to me later on when I attempted to solve some of the grammatical intricacies. Pronouns are very seldom used; prepositions, conjunctions, and case-endings innumerable, being all tacked on at the ends of the words in a way that is extremely bewildering to an unhappy foreigner.

The German spoken by the Austrians is not a little bit like the language we learn from the pages of that worthy Ollendorf, whose well-turned and irreproachably correct High-German sentences meet only with pitying contempt in Vienna. From the Court to the gutter everybody speaks a *gemüthlich* dialect, the chief characteristics of which are the paucity of vowels and the abundance of words ending in *l*. *Mutter* becomes *Mutterl; Messer, Messerl. Knabe* changes itself to *Büb; mich* abbreviates itself to *mi*, and so on. Therefore, when I attempted to glean information from officials or fellow-travellers, my efforts scarcely met with the success they deserved. If, with great difficulty and many gestures, I managed to make them understand *me*, I was totally unable to understand *them*. Having no idea of the lin-

guistic abilities of the Hungarians, it never entered my head to try French, a language universally familiar to the better classes, so I floundered on in 'a-nation-and-a-dummy' sort of way, thoroughly enjoying the strangeness of my position and always wondering delightedly what was going to happen next. Nothing would have surprised me, however strange and unexpected.

We reached Budapest, in the midst of much shouting and tapping of bells with wooden hammers, about two o'clock in the afternoon. The people to whom I was going lived near Szekes Fehérvár, some thirty miles south of the capital, so I had to drive through the city of Pest across the magnificent suspension bridge to another terminus in Buda, whence a branch line ran to Nyék, the station nearest to the country seat of the hospitable folk who 'hoped I would stay there as long as I felt happy amongst them.'

Having restored myself in the *Restauration* at Buda, I strolled outside and sat on the sunny bank beside the Danube to while away the hours till my train started. From my coign of vantage I could watch the traffic along the road as well as the boats and steamers passing up and down the river. The whole scene charmed me, in spite of the dust, which not even the perpetual water-cart seems able to lay for any length of time. When I got back to the station everybody seemed to be drinking coffee, and eating a delicious cakey sort of bread called *Kolaczi.* So, remembering the adage, 'When you are at Rome, do as the Romans do,' I followed their example.

By holding up two fingers and saying 'Nyék' I was able to secure a second-class ticket to my destination, and was shut into a very comfortable carriage by the

guard to whom I showed it. This *conducteur* was either a man of very sociable disposition or else he had a strain of knight-errantry in his blood, prompting him to act the squire to one whom he held to be a distressed damsel, or (possibly) visions of a 'tip' at the journey's end hovered before his mental vision. Anyhow, at each stop he invariably came to make polite remarks and point out the scenery to me. He was so high-bred, so courteous, in his demeanour, that I began to think he must really be a 'gentleman' in disguise, or perhaps even a brigand of the Claude Duval style. In fact the same thought was continually crossing my mind about everybody I came in contact with, until it dawned upon me gradually that most of the men of all classes *were* gentlemen, not in disguise, but in reality. This was rather a nice discovery to make after you had been led to suppose that you had left civilization behind you in leaving Austria. It was then for the first time that a doubt of the true significance of the word entered my mind. In what did civilization consist? Was it an unmixed Good, or a partial Evil, I wondered, as we whirled along, and—I am still wondering. Will anyone satisfactorily solve this problem for me?

Our train was a fast one, so we did not take more than an hour and a half to cover the distance. At about 6.30 I stepped jauntily out on to the platform and waited whilst the polite *conducteur* gathered my belongings into a heap beside me. He then handed me, and them, over to the care of the station-master, gave me a grand bow and a: '*Csokolom a kezet nagysdgos kissasszony!*' (I kiss your hand, honourable damsel!) before jumping into his van and giving the signal for departure. I replied to his greeting in a style that is

'quite English.' What a Goth he must have thought me! I ought, at least, to have said: 'God go with you!' or, 'A happy good evening to you!' One of the very first things that life in Hungary taught me was how to return a courteous greeting courteously. But *revenons à nos moutons*, as our French neighbours say. The *moutons* in this case being me and my luggage. There we stood together on the otherwise empty platform. Beside us stood the tall station-master, twirling his long moustaches patiently whilst he waited my commands. With some difficulty I made him comprehend that there ought to be a carriage awaiting me from Pázmánd. He looked dubious, went outside to gaze up the road, and came back shaking his head. There was no conveyance of any kind in sight on the long straight road. Would I be pleased to seat myself in the big, bare waiting-room and wait? It would surely arrive directly. He spoke German, by the way, in a style that rather resembled Ollendorf, so that we understood each other (comparatively) well.

Quarter of an hour passed—no carriage. Half an hour—still no carriage. The peasantry from the cottages near at hand came crowding round to peep in through the door and the windows, all of which were thrown wide open. The sight of a foreign young lady with fair hair and blue eyes, who was so tall and slight, excited their curiosity greatly. She looked like a princess, but if she was a princess why was she travelling by herself, and sitting so long alone in the station of Nyék? There was evidently something mysterious about her. She looked very tired too, and perhaps she might be hungry. This was evidently what they were saying to each other, for one woman

brought me some milk in a rough wooden bowl, and a very handsome girl offered me some peaches through the window. I refused the milk with thanks, but took the fruit; whereupon the woman ran home and came back with a slice of black bread, which she put to my lips, and then pointed to the peaches, signifying that they would be good eaten together. When I took out my purse to pay them for their kindness there was a regular outcry of indignant protest, so I could only smile my gratitude for their hospitable attentions. I tried to eat the bread as though it was quite to my taste, for they all stood watching me, leaning with their elbows on the various window-sills. Have you ever tried to eat some article of food that is most unpalatable to you as though you enjoyed it? If so, you will understand how the next ten minutes passed. Fortunately the peaches were ripe and juicy, so I managed to dispose of half the bread by their aid. Then, human nature could no more, and I laid the remainder on the table.

The Hungarian 'barbarians' interested me greatly from the first moment. That they possessed one savage virtue was obvious, *i.e.* unbounded hospitality to strangers. These Magyar women are generally of medium height; they have broad, rather square shoulders and beautifully moulded figures, dark brown hair, peachy complexions, and big, soft, velvety brown eyes, full of a latent fire that requires very little to become a living flame. The men are tall, well-formed and graceful in figure, with bronzed features, dark, long moustaches and big dark eyes. Both sexes have particularly small hands and feet, daintily rounded wrists and ankles, and very luxuriant hair. The peasant girls generally go about bare-headed and bare-

footed, except on Sundays or Saints-days. They are not the least shy under any circumstances, and as they lounged round they evidently discussed my every feature and all I had on without reserve. Their sonorous speech and their very energetic manner of speaking was pleasant to listen to and watch; so the time did not lag, though an hour and a half went by and still found me sitting on there in the fast-deepening twilight, listening in a half-drowsy way to the musical accents of the peasantry and trying to discover from their expressions and gestures what it was they were saying. The longing from which Robert Burns was evidently suffering, when he sang:

'O! wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as ithers see us,'

burned within my breast. I felt that I would have given a great deal to know exactly what sort of impression an Englishwoman made upon these kindly 'barbarians.' It grew quite dark at last. A porter lighted the smelly oil-lamps all over the station. The peasants bade me many good-nights and went home to bed. I sought the office of the polite station-master and asked him where I could get either a vehicle or a night's lodging. He informed me in well-rounded periods that a vehicle would be a difficult matter at such a late hour; besides, the roads were very bad, and in the dark one could not see to drive; moreover, the peasant-wagons were dreadfully shaky and not the fit thing for a foreign lady to ride in; but there was a highly respectable inn down at the other end of the village where they could probably give me a bed and a meal. The wine there was good, and the hostess was

famous for her *Turos esusza* and her *Krumpli nudli.* Still, if the honourable damosel would condescend to take his advice, he would suggest waiting until the next train had come in from Buda. Perhaps the gentle-folks at Pázmánd had mistaken the hour of the honourable damosel's arrival. Such things would happen sometimes.

Finding that the next train was due in half-an-hour, I acquiesced in this idea and began to stroll up and down the deserted platform chuckling with amused contentment at my position. Houseless and friendless in a foreign land, and yet apparently surrounded by friendly helpers.

About ten minutes later, a sort of superior 'buggy,' painted a yellowish tan-colour and drawn by a splendid pair of chestnuts, dashed up to the entrance with a tremendous flourish. The station-master hurried out to meet the footman, who had sprung down, and was making eager enquiries of him. Then they came towards me, and the latter, after a grand bow, began to make a long and profuse apology of which I only understood the word 'telegram.' That was enough though. My 'wire' had probably been delayed in transmission, hence this tardy appearance. In point of fact, it had not been delivered in Pázmánd until after I reached Nyék, though it had been sent off from Buda soon after two o'clock. It was neither the first nor yet the last time that such irregularities had occurred in Hungary. On one occasion, the telegraph required thirteen hours to transmit a message about sixty miles. In consequence of which I reached my destination more than four hours earlier than the announcement of my arrival. When these things happen, people only

shrug their shoulders; nobody thinks of bothering themselves to make a fuss over it or complain at head-quarters.

Cordial and unbounded hospitality is one of the most prominent traits of the Hungarian character all over the country. You are welcomed anywhere and everywhere by total strangers with the greatest warmth and kindness. The resources of the household and the neighbourhood are marshalled out for your comfort and amusement. You are made to feel by your entertainers that your presence amongst them is a genuine piece of good luck, which they cannot fail to appreciate. Except in the towns, hotels, or even good inns, are few and far between, but you do not miss them. When you desire to visit any particular part of the country, you have only to make that desire known and a letter of introduction is obtained for you from some of the friends of your friends' friends, or possibly a distant connection of somebody known to your latest hosts; either to a noble's family, or, failing that, to an estate-agent, a country squire, a doctor, a lawyer, a parson, or the head peasant of a village, and you either put in an appearance at their residence with these credentials in your hand, or send them on before, and receive by return of post a pressing invitation to go to them whenever you like, and to wire the probable hour of your arrival at the nearest railway station, where you will find a conveyance awaiting you. This is not only a most pleasant method of exploring a country, but it also gives you a thousand opportunities of seeing things and people in their normal condition, of which hotel-life is not much criterion. Hotels are always more or less cosmopolitan. However, let us return to Nyék and

my carriage and pair. In a very short space of time I was perched up in the seat behind the two men-servants. My luggage was packed between bundles of hay into a very noisy light cart that rumbled along behind us, and off we went at a spanking trot. The King's highway in Hungary is always quite as good as the old coach-roads are in England—many of them indeed are, like our own Roman roads, relics of early invaders. But the instant you turn off the high road, you begin to wonder very forcibly whether there may not be a good deal of truth in the old Spanish proverb still current in the province of Granada: 'God made the country, but the Devil makes the roads.' After bowling along for a few miles of flat, white, dusty length with rows of acacias planted beside shallow ditches (now dry) to serve on either side instead of hedges, we turned off the main road, and then the fun began.

A golden moon had risen in the clear dark blue of the evening sky, where silvery stars winked and sparkled like diamonds set in an azure roof. I love moonlight almost as much as sunlight, but that night the roads gave me very little chance to watch the fascinating grotesqueness of the lights and shadows, or to dream of those other beings who may, or may not, inhabit the starry worlds above us, though I really couldn't help laughingly wondering whether there was any other individual on Venus, Mars, or any other planet, who was being so mercilessly rattled about over such execrable roads as myself—it was just as much as I could do to prevent myself from taking an 'iligant somersault' first on this side, then on that. For the first time in my life I realised the immense amount of gymnastic exercise that must be taken by 'a parched

pea in a frying-pan,' and vaguely mused whilst being tossed from side to side as to the possibility of parched peas being endowed with risibility, and whether they ever chuckled as much over their involuntary evolutions as I did over mine. Down we went into a rut half a yard deep with one wheel, and had scarcely scrambled out of that hole before the other wheel bumped into another, and so on over the whole six miles. During the late autumn and early spring these roads are knee-deep in mud; several feet of frozen snow cover them in winter, whilst during the dry, hot summer they are nothing better than rutty tracks of hard-baked mud. Finding after a while that nothing happened—no springs broke, no wheels came off, no screws were loosened, and that we did not even relax our pace for a moment—I began to feel an immense respect for Magyar horses, Magyar drivers and Magyar coach-builders. This respect was only increased when I discovered that every peasant drove at least a pair in his noisy oblong cart, that they always went at break-neck speed, and that he didn't trouble himself about any harness worth mentioning, except reins of rope, and a strap or two tied up with bits of string. This is quite enough in his estimation for all practical purposes; anything further is mere ostentation, and would only be a stupid waste of money for a peasant. If you were a gentleman, or a great noble, things were different, of course, and it behoved you to smarten up your horseflesh with anything that happened to catch your fancy. Before reaching Pázmánd we passed down the main streets of two other villages. There were lights in some of the houses, but the majority of the people were already

in bed. Here and there a peasant saluted me with bows and hat-flourishes fit for a queen. These I returned amusedly—the coachman and footmen did the same, but gravely and ceremoniously. It was evidently the custom of the country and included us all alike.

About half-past nine we dashed through a pair of modern iron gates, rounded a shrubbery, and drew up at the massive oaken door of what had once been a monastery and was now a comfortable country house. It formed the exact shape of an L, in the angle of which stood a large stone fountain surrounded by a big bed of the gorgeous flame-coloured *Canna indica*. A Viennese maid, deputed to wait upon me, ran out to help me down and escort me to my room, where she began to disrobe me with voluble celerity. In a trice she had pulled down my hair, brushed it, and done it up again. The gentlefolks were dying to see me, she explained, but they thought I should prefer to re-arrange my toilette before meeting strangers, so she was to take me into Madame's boudoir as soon as I was ready. The house was full of guests, but they were all gentlemen come to shoot, and perhaps I wouldn't care to see them that evening. They had waited supper for me, and there was going to be roast-beef for my especial benefit, but Madame had told her to say that I could sup in my own room if I preferred, as I should surely be tired after so long, long a journey. She chattered on in this strain while she took off my boots and made me generally presentable; then she took me down a long, narrow, stone corridor into a large, lofty room, over the private chapel. It had a bare polished oak floor, a large white china stove, and no end of windows, shaded

by white lace curtains inside, and green Venetians outside. Huge baskets of beautifully made artificial flowers stood on gilt *consoles*, a grand piano occupied one end of the room, and chairs and sofas covered with pale blue striped damask were arranged in stiff circles round a couple of small tables, on which handsome lamps were burning. These much polished floors are the pride of every good housekeeper, but they were rather a trial to me at first. Tired, and shaken to a jelly almost, my high heels and these slippery floors gave me a sensation of being on skates for the first time, and I was always expecting to find myself lying at the bottom of the stairs with a broken neck, until I got accustomed to them. Two ladies, both young, sprang up from the sofa to receive me effusively. They kissed me, pitied my pale cheeks, thanked me for coming, enquired politely after the well-being of my people, hoped I was ready to eat a good supper, begged me to ask the maid Toni for anything and everything I wanted, apologised for the lack of English 'comforts,' and enjoined me not to get up next morning until they had been in to see me. Toni would bring up my breakfast at any hour I chose to order it. Naturally, I would prefer to have supper in my room and go to bed immediately; they quite understood how tired I must be after travelling nearly sixteen hours. So they escorted me back to my room, kissed me good-night, and went off to their men guests in the smoke-room. A few minutes later Toni re-appeared with a sumptuous meal of soup, beefsteak, fried chicken, salad, lemon soufflé, cheese, and various kinds of fruit. The massive silver, delicate napery and dainty china on which it was served made me smile when I remembered the accusations of barbarism

bestowed upon Hungary by the good folk in Vienna. Directly Toni had cleared away my supper things she began to unfold the handsome *Bettdecke* and arrange the fine linen pillows at the head of the narrow wooden bedstead. They each had a broad strip of lovely green silk, covered by a hand-made lace insertion at one end. There were no bedclothes except a quilted green silk counterpane, mathematically buttoned into a hem-stitched linen coverlet. The mattress was neatly covered by a linen sheet tucked tightly in round the sides, so that not a wrinkle was to be seen. That night I could have slept soundly on a mere bundle of hay, and a sigh of contentment as I laid my weary head on these delicious, cool pillows had scarcely time to escape my lips before sleep sealed my eyelids—and such a sleep too! I verily believe you might have re-fought the battle of Waterloo in my room without disturbing my slumbers. Not even Napoleon's stentorian 'Sauve qui peut!' would have awakened me. All night long the watchman circled the house, blowing a horn and repeating his rhythmic cry every quarter of an hour, but I heard him not. Toni came in to bring my breakfast-tray five times before she went to inform Madame that she was getting frightened, for 'das englische Fräulein' neither stirred nor spoke, not even when she rattled the cup and kicked the bath over. Down they came all in a body, and knocked vigorously at the panels of my door—so vigorously, indeed, that I half-awoke, and muttered drowsily: 'Come in.' They came in, and I opened my eyes to find three anxious faces bending kindly over me. That surprised me into opening them still wider. In a moment I recollected my present whereabouts, and sat promptly up to

grasp their outstretched hands and reply to their greetings and enquiries.

'Yes; I was quite well, quite rested and quite ready for my breakfast. Wasn't it very late?'

'Well, nearly midday,' they smilingly replied; 'and the gentlemen had all gone out partridge-shooting hours ago. When I had breakfasted, Toni would help me to dress, and then they would make me acquainted with the house and grounds before it was time to "make toilet" for the big dinner at two o'clock. The "shooters" would be back by then. After dinner we should all drink black coffee in the smoking-room, and then go for a drive. Between five and six *goûter* would be served on the terrace, and then everybody would do as they liked till supper-time at eight. Did I play, or sing? Both? Ah! That was charming! After supper there was often music, and generally cards. Did English people go to bed late, or early?' When my breakfast was done they departed, and I joined them half-an-hour later in the garden under the chestnut-trees that formed an arcade round one side of the house. What a babel that dinner seemed to me! The Hungarians are an excitable, emotional people who gesticulate greatly. They talk with immense energy, and every muscle of their faces takes part in the simplest and most unimportant conversation. Their verbal politeness is as great as their amiable courtesy, but their standard of good manners at table is entirely different to ours. For instance, if you want a thing that stands on the opposite side of the table at dessert, you must either stretch across and reach it, or walk round and fetch it for yourself. To give anybody else the trouble of passing it over would be a terrible breach

of good form. Like every other continental nation, the men are afflicted with a necessity for constant expectoration, and it is not uncommon to see a man of the upper middle-classes hold his handkerchief up by the corners in front of his face and spit at it during meal-times. Knives and forks, too, are quite differently employed there. After helping yourself from the dishes that are invariably carved in the kitchen and handed round, you must cut up your meat into convenient pieces, lay down your knife on the rests provided for the purpose, take your fork in your right hand, bend your head low over your plate and shovel your food in with graceful haste. If there is any sauce or gravy left, you sop that up with pieces of bread and leave your plate almost as clean as it was to begin with. Fruit compotes and sweets of every kind not manageable with a knife are eaten with a tea-spoon. Asking a guest to have more of any particular dish is tantamount to saying that you consider him shy and countrified. Anyone knowing the usages 'of good society' would naturally ask the servants for more, if he required it. Should he not do so, it is a sign that he has eaten all he desires. On ordinary occasions most people breakfast in their bedrooms, but a shooting-party generally assembles in the dining-room for a common meal together, in which case slices of cold meat, boiled eggs, honey, and fruit of all kinds are served in addition to coffee and wine; each person has his own separate *Kave-Equipage* and makes his own beverage to suit his own palate, and of course everybody begins to smoke directly he has finished his repast without considering it necessary to say 'By your leave' to his companions. In fact, there is no nation where smoking is so universal

a habit as in Hungary. Up to sixteen, boys and girls are not permitted more than an occasional cigarette, but after that age they all smoke. Men and women always leave the table together and go straight to the smoking-room, where a curious ceremony takes place. Beginning with the host and hostess, everybody shakes hands with everybody else, saying cordially: *Jo etvágyot kivánok* (I wish you a good appetite). It always struck me that this aspiration would have been so much more appropriate if it had been expressed *before* meals instead of *after*. Cigars and cigarettes are then handed round, and I can assure you that I often felt quite 'out of it.' So much so, that I several times tried to enjoy a mild cigarette, but it only burned my tongue and had to be perpetually relighted, because somehow it *would* go out constantly. Whenever I laughed the smoke used always to get into my throat in a most extraordinary manner. I used to envy the women, enjoying their 'weeds' so placidly; moreover, it's not pleasant to be thought a prude, so I really tried hard to like cigarettes, but in vain! It sometimes took me a whole afternoon to get through one. However, in self-defence, I felt obliged to institute a cigarette-case and keep it filled with mild Egyptian cigarettes, which I could bring out and offer to other people. Numbers of girls and men have whole collections of these cases spread out on tables in their bedrooms instead of knick-knacks or photographs. Most girls smoke cigarettes, but married women generally prefer thick, long cigars; a few, *very* few, go in for pipes. The lower-class men are never to be seen without a long wooden pipe, having a china bowl, in their mouths, but their wives and daughters don't often smoke at all until they are old, so this accomplishment

is a sign of *bon ton* in the feminine sex. *À propos*, people are always saying that cigarettes are so unwholesome. Candidly I must confess that even if this statement is correct in theory, it does not appear to be so in practice. Except for the fact of their redundancy, Hungarian women retain their youthfulness and good looks quite as long as English women do. You can see plenty of them 'fair, fat, and forty' without a grey hair or a wrinkle, who are as lively, as clever, and as *lebenslustig* as they were twenty years earlier. The men, on the contrary, grow old rather early, but I don't think cigarettes have much to do with that.

'*Goûter*' is a slight refection that takes the place of our afternoon tea. It varies according to the season of the year from ices and fruits to coffee and cakes. I was at first honoured with tea every day. A rare old china jar full of the blackest tea (at seven gulden per kilo) that could be bought in Budapest, and a jug of *warm* water were invariably placed before me, so that I might brew it to my own liking. Boiled milk, slices of lemon, and a tiny *carafe* of old rum always surrounded my cup. No one drinks tea there without putting a spoonful of rum into it, and I'm not surprised either; it tempers the warm water, which might otherwise be disastrous in its effects; but it's horribly nasty to my taste. For some weeks this decoction was my daily beverage, yet I could not bring my mind to hint at the penance this tea-drinking was to me, because they were *so* kind, *so* hospitable, and I knew there wasn't such an article as a kettle to be bought anywhere in Pázmánd.

How quickly the days grew into weeks and the weeks into months! There was so much to do, to see, to think of, to write about, that I had no time to feel homesick

or to sit moping and sorrowing over one whom nobody could give back to me.

Being great at cookery and rather proud of my capabilities that way, they easily persuaded me to go into the kitchen with them and concoct all sorts of English dishes—chicken pie, fruit tarts, trifle, orange marmalade, plum pudding, mince pies, pound cake, potted game, and Irish stew were amongst the items I remember. In return for which they initiated me into the mysteries of chocolate tart, hazel-nut cake, chestnut purée, and a dozen other things equally delicious. The cook, Maddalena, a Viennese, was an extremely fat old lady, who had been in the family for years. She took a great fancy to me, and used to call me the 'gnädiges Engel-Fräulein' (the honourable Angel-Miss) because I occasionally visited her in the privacy of her own apartment to hear her recite Schiller's 'Maria Stuart.' How immensely proud she was, too, of her cracked renderings of impassioned solos from 'Il Trovatore' and 'Norma'! She was very tall and commanding in appearance, and her kitchen maids lived much in awe of her. Her attire always consisted of a loose sort of dressing jacket and a voluminous skirt. Her masses of iron-grey hair were rolled round the crown of her head and surmounted by an enormous white mob-cap tied under her double chin with purple ribbons. In this classical costume she would pose and gesticulate as she stood declaiming in tragic tones, only stopping occasionally to pick up her spectacles, which she was rather in the habit of 'swishing' off with her wide sleeves in moments of unwonted energy. Such an irresistibly comic travesty of the poor ill-fated queen it has never been my good fortune to see anywhere. It would certainly have made her fortune

at a burlesque theatre. How I ever managed to keep my countenance during these performances is still a mystery to me. The day I left Pázmánd she kissed my hands with copious floods of tears, murmuring brokenly between her sobs, 'Adieu! adieu! my honoured Angel-Miss! You are the only person in the wide world who has ever encouraged or appreciated the artistic side of my nature.' It was then that my conscience smote me and prompted me to a very un-English action. I actually bent down and kissed the wet, shrivelled cheek of the disconsolate old cook whom I had not scrupled to make a fool of for my own edification.

It is astonishing how fond I grew of Pázmánd and everybody connected with it. Hungarian women of every class are noted housewives, so they were quite willing to let me penetrate with them into the mysteries of the store room, the linen closets, the laundry, the cellar, the fruit rooms, and the dairy. By this means also I soon learned something of the language, as I used to make lists of all I saw and write the Magyar opposite. My spelling and pronunciation of the latter were often the cause of much merriment. They spoke English fluently but not prettily. Many of the servants and the people about the place could speak German, because there is a large Saxon colony within a few miles' distance of Pázmánd. I found, too, that they were rather glad to have an opportunity of airing their proficiency in that language, and it was excellent practice for me, so I got into the habit of talking to anybody and everybody I came into contact with upon every possible occasion. Of course, ludicrous mistakes frequently occurred on both sides during these conversations, but that was quite a minor matter. If I was hard up for a topic, there was

always the weather to fall back upon. I became sometimes almost eloquent expatiating upon the badness of my own native clime and the delights of theirs. Besides, there were the pigs to discuss, the horses to praise, the oxen to admire, or the dogs to pat, even if we were too unacquainted to continue a longer conversation. One pair of big entrance-gates looked directly on to the village street, and was a most splendid coign of vantage from which to watch the weddings, funerals, and processions wending their way to and from the church.

The family themselves were really Greek-Catholics, and had a private chapel in the house; nevertheless, on Sundays and saints' days we used to drive in a sort of victoria out through the other gate and a few hundred yards down the street to the white-washed village church, and climb up a funny little staircase into a sort of glass cupboard to the right of the High Altar, where we knelt devoutly during the Mass—for the sake of example. During the whole time I was there we never once walked in the village. When I faintly suggested a desire to explore it on foot, the whole household held up their hands in horror. Such a breach of local etiquette was not to be thought of! It would create quite a scandal! With all those horses and carriages in the stables too. Jozsi could drive me anywhere. It was only to tell him. Besides—God in Heaven!—why, the peasant-dogs, accustomed only to peasant costumes, would set upon a foreigner and tear her to pieces. Not wishing to have the fragments of myself gathered up in twelve baskets—or even five—I did not attempt the experiment then; but, long afterwards, I walked in other villages armed with a stout stick and all my courage. The lean curs certainly did run after

me barking furiously, and even worried my gown occasionally, but they never carried their ideas of citizenship to the extent of biting. Perhaps it was the feminine resolution in my British eye that deterred them. Who knows? As a matter of fact they terrified me often, especially the very big ones; but I don't like to be beaten, more particularly by curs. Having made up my mind to investigate a locality, I investigated it and chanced the consequences. Chance generally favours the brave, and I am still alive to tell the tale.

Two days after my advent at Pázmánd I was driven over to make the acquaintance of a baron and his family who lived near another village some miles away. This was my first introduction to the Magyar aristocracy, and the baroness was not exactly what might be called either a typical or favourable specimen of her kind. She is a tiny, high-shouldered, sallow-faced, black-haired, little person, and what the French euphemistically call *un peu toquée*. She possesses a hard, monotonous voice, speaks English fluently, and talks incessantly and disjointedly. She entertained me the whole afternoon with blood-curdling stories of the deeds wrought by the celebrated brigand, Sándor Rozsa, and his band of *szegény legény*, interspersed with the daring burglaries of a man named Lamberte. All the stories of barbarism, rape, and murder I had been told of in Vienna recurred to my mind, and I went away with the fixed impression that Hungary literally swarmed with highwaymen, and used to lie awake for weeks in a tremor of terror lest they should walk in some night, as was their custom, to insist on kissing us all and making us dance with them before they carried us off to their mountain fastnesses, and kept us there till somebody

paid a big ransom for our release. It wasn't so much the fact of being carried off that alarmed me, because they always treated women with the greatest courtesy, but I felt certain that my people would never be able to raise the ransom they would demand, so then I should either have to marry one of the brigands and become a brigand-ess myself, or feel a dagger through my heart, and I hate the sight of blood; it always makes me shudder, even when it's only pig's blood. It was not till long afterwards that I heard incidentally of Sándor Rozsa's execution some fifty years before, and of the total extinction of the *szegény legény* a short time after his death. From a peculiar way she had of fussing round after her two tall, handsome daughters, I immediately nicknamed her in my own mind 'the brown hen.' Brown hens are always more solicitous over their chickens than those of any other colour, you know. Her husband, a tall, broad-shouldered, good-looking man, about forty-three years of age, was typically Magyar both in person and manners. I say *was* advisedly, for he no longer *is*—poor fellow! not in this world at least. Just before I left Hungary his death was announced in the newspapers. He cut short his own existence by putting a bullet through his brain, and all for the sake of a woman—not the brown hen though, of course. That also is typically Magyar. The bullet I mean. Shakespeare assures us that

> 'Men have died and worms have eaten them,
> But, not for love.'

Since my wanderings in Hungary I have come to the conclusion that the Immortal Bard is just a little bit 'out' in that assertion. Yet, in spite of this, there

are no other people on the face of the earth who admire and appreciate that great dramatist as he is admired and appreciated by the bulk of the Hungarians. They have done more for him than we have ever done for any foreign poet or play-writer. Before the terrible '48 Revolution racked the country, their three greatest poets, Vörösmarty, János Arány, and Sándor Petöfy, were invited by the Kisfaludy Society to collaborate in making a complete translation of his plays. They acquiesced and carried the work through admirably, the result being that Shakespeare is almost as much a household god in Magyarland as he is in England. You constantly hear him quoted in the most unexpected quarters. I knew one young man, doing his time of military service too, who could reel off page after page of his plays, with an amount of expression and dramatic action that made me feel 'small.' In fact, this middle-class young man, with no great pretensions to education or culture, taught me to see much, very much, that I had never before suspected. He was shy, silent, and diffident, till you got him on to Shakespeare or Petöfy, then he forgot himself, and immediately became another creature. He also played the czimbalom remarkably well, and sang no end of folk-songs, but he would only become musical in his own room, when he thought nobody was listening.

What queer animals human beings are!

The people I was with, by the way, were not nobles, not even genuine Magyars. Their grandfather was a Greek, their father had been a Greek, too. He had made a big fortune 'in leather,' married a very beautiful Hungarian peasant from one of the southern provinces, and naturalised himself. Then he bought the half-ruined

monastery at Pázmánd, converted it into a fine 'place,' and set to work to establish a 'family.' He educated his wife, brought up his children to be ladies and gentlemen, and died, bequeathing to them not only his hoards and his houses, his vineyards and his cornfields, but also his linguistic abilities and his social ambitions. It did not take me long to discover that Society (with the biggest possible S) was the one aspiration of their lives. They are all endowed with great business capacity and a love of orderliness, I admit; still there is no doubt whatever that every action of their lives was regulated with a view to public opinion, and the attention that such and such behaviour was likely to attract in certain quarters. It was with this end in view that the eldest son, to whom the Pázmánd estate belonged, started classes for straw-plait, basket-weaving, and lace-making at his own expense in the village; that he brought cows from Switzerland and Guernsey, pigs from Yorkshire, horses from Ireland, sheep from the Downs and the Welsh mountains; that he established agricultural shows for the neighbourhood, and gave prizes for all sorts of things; that he went into Parliament as member for some little place up in Transylvania, and paid all the election expenses himself; it was also for this reason that he liked to boast of his 'successes' with great ladies. But it all availed him nothing. They were charming, cultured people (and kindness itself wherever they took a fancy), but withal the charmed circle of 'the great world' remained for them a closed one. The stigma of 'trade' is a stigma everywhere, it seems, more or less. In Hungary, as in Korea, it is *more,* in England for the moment it is *less.* To-day trade is fashionable amongst

us, so fashionable, indeed, that if Napoleon were alive still, he would be perfectly justified in calling us 'a nation of shopkeepers' now. What was a mere metaphor at that epoch is a reality at this end-of-a-century. This phase of our national character is one which a Magyar noble finds it impossible to comprehend. In his eyes a noble who stoops to trade stoops to infamy. *Noblesse oblige!* He may beg, borrow, or even steal if need be, but work? No, never. Work is a degradation not to be tolerated. Let him shoot himself, or live upon the bounty of some woman who loves him, if the Revolution (or the Jews!) have ruined him. The only two professions permissible to him are the Army and employment in one of the Government offices, unless he can get into the House of Commons. That will bring him in about £300 per annum, but that is, of course, very uncertain, and constituencies are not to be relied upon. They are almost as fickle as the feminine sex is reputed to be. The Army is what suits a Magyar noble best, only that can scarcely be looked upon as a paying profession for an impecunious young man. *Tout au contraire.* Life in barracks gives him such irresistible opportunities for sowing a luxuriant crop of wild oats. The Government offices secure you a moderately good salary, but what a life! To be shut up day after day in a stuffy room 'quill-driving,' when the blood is dancing through your veins, and wild longings for freedom and sunshine and space, inherited from lines of warlike ancestors, go coursing through your brain!

Did it ever strike any of you to pity the caged lions in the Zoo? I always feel for them from the bottom of my heart, and for the caged larks too.

In spite of the fact that Hungary is a country of peasant-proprietors, there are yet plenty of large landed proprietors. You might walk or drive round Pázmánd for miles in every direction without getting off the estate. The roads across it have neither hedges, ditches, nor many trees along them, and the only line of demarcation between the different fields and meadows is a sparse row of apricot or acacia trees. When we wanted to drive to any given point, we always went as the crow flies, straight across country. Driving over stubble-fields or undulating meadow-land was, moreover, far less 'bumping' than going along the hard rutty roads. One night, on our return from a day's visit to a distant neighbour, we came across a scene indescribably picturesque to my western eyes. To paint it adequately colour and the hand of a master are requisite, but pen and ink may give just an idea of its originality and charm.

It was a clear, moonless night; the deep, cloudless blue of the sky was brilliant with myriads of silver stars, the air crisp and cool with a light breeze blowing. We were driving in a sort of pony-cart with a tiny seat behind where a tiny groom of twelve years old was perched jauntily, and our ponies, named 'Gipsy' and 'Playful,' were also of the tiniest description. Our little vehicle seemed able to go up and down, in and out, anywhere. Having left the high-road an hour before, we had been crossing miles of stubble, and came at last to the edge of a deep, dried-out lake, through which a narrow track led. Dashing down it, between steep banks, we suddenly came into the large level basin, and then saw that some *csikos* (horseherds) had taken possession of it for a night-encampment. They had

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made huge wood-fires at either end of the track to keep their unruly charges from straying out, and nearly a hundred horses of all ages and sizes were standing or lying about in the centre. Round the fires men, women, children, and dogs were grouped; near one of them, lying at full length on the grassy bank, wrapped in his long cloak, was a youth playing (on a long wooden pipe) one of those melancholy folk-songs that seem to have got into my very blood. The sound of one played by a gipsy-band in London always acts like a spell upon me even now, and I very quickly learned to sing dozens of them by heart.

Now and then a voice would take up the air and sing a verse or two, only to lapse off into conversation again. The effect of the flickering fire-light on the dark groups of animals, and on the intelligent faces of the people in their long white sheepskins and round felt hats, was simply charming; especially when a girl in a red kerchief bent over to rake some potatoes out of the hot ashes, and toss them laughingly into the hat of a young man lounging picturesquely beside her.

What a pity it is that nobody is scientific enough to invent some instantaneous electric method of perpetuating a scene like this, with all its wonderful lights and shadows, its poetry and barbarism!

After I had been at Pázmánd long enough to settle down as a member of the family, I used to steal away from the house during the hours when the others were engaged on their several pet avocations, and go off for solitary rambles over the country, roaming aimlessly on wherever chance happened to take me, enjoying the delights of a balmy autumn wherein delicate pink mists

and tints of gold and bronze-red figure largely. Most of the stubble-fields were either covered by a tiny white starry-flowered weed that fills the air with a faint, delicious odour when trodden upon, or else made beautiful by long lines of soft-eyed white oxen in double yokes, slowly dragging wooden ploughs along shallow furrows and leaving behind them the pungent scent of new-turned earth. Once I saw a pretty girl, about sixteen, in a full short pink cotton skirt and a loose blue bodice, top-boots and no stockings, hard at work in a turnip-field. She was 'topping roots.' As soon as I drew near she greeted me in the usual way, and came to kiss my hand. I spoke to her and found that she knew a little German. Near by where we stood lay a bundled-up sheepskin coat, over which she bent solicitously from time to time during our conversation. My curiosity was aroused:

'What have you there?' I enquired.

'Please, honourable lady, it is our baby.'

'*Your* baby! Why, you look too young to be married.'

'Please, honourable lady, we are not yet married. My father died last winter and his funeral cost a great deal, so we hadn't money left to celebrate our marriage properly then. Our friends all advised us to put it off; therefore I went to live with Sándor, since one house is cheaper than two, and we've been saving up ever since. At Christmas time there won't be much to do on the land; so we have decided to keep the wedding then, and I've got the priest's fee tied up in a handkerchief at home all ready for him.'

This was quite a novel idea to me! Rather a startling one, too, to a girl fresh from an English

provincial town; but one that seemed perfectly correct and perfectly natural to the mind of a Magyar peasant. Such an every-day fashion amongst them, indeed, and one so far recognised as to demand a special head-dress. Married folk who have feasted their friends and paid their priestly dues are entitled to don a black silk kerchief, girls who are *noch zu haben* (still to be had) go bare-headed, those who are informally married wear a coloured kerchief. I am devoted to babies (when they don't cry), so I peeped at the tiny, red, puckered creature with interest.

'How old is it?' was my next question.

'It will be a week old to-morrow, please,' answered the youthful mother proudly.

'A week? Did you say a week?' I gasped.

'Yes, please, a week to-morrow.'

My face evidently expressed astonishment, for she queried in a slightly hurt tone:

'The honourable lady thinks him perhaps too small for his age?'

'No, no; not at all! He is a very fine child, a remarkably fine child,' I hastened to assure her, slipping a twenty-kreutzer piece into its tiny clenched fist.

On my way back I sat down at the edge of a spinney, leaned my back against the trunk of an oak tree and pondered. My recent interview had given me much food for reflection. Deeper and deeper grew my abstraction. Men and women, birth and death, morality and immorality filled my brain till these meditations were rudely interrupted by—pigs. A whole herd of them ran grunting past me on their homeward journey. With a hurried reply to the polite salutation of the

disznos, I jumped up and literally took to my heels. Afraid of a few pigs! some male being exclaims contemptuously. Oh no; not at all, I did not run from the pigs; I ran from the fleas. You may laugh perhaps, but it is no laughing matter, I can assure you. A terribly big, voracious species of those little black demons pastures itself by thousands on the pigs and poultry of Magyarland. You have merely to cross a road that has been already traversed by one of these herds of swine to find out the meaning of the word martyrdom, without the aid of any dictionary. Not that they *bite* me much. They only utilise my body as a sort of human racecourse on which to run Derbies innumerable and interminable, until they reduce me to the verge of raving lunacy. Given a sensitive skin and *carte blanche* where fleas are concerned, and you have an infallible recipe for sending the strongest-minded male or female 'as mad as a hatter.' I shudder even at this length of time over the memory of my experiences with these and other entomological tormentors. It has sometimes been a matter of wonder to me that any Egyptians should have survived for the Almighty to wreak His vengeance upon after the plague of 'lice, flies and all manner of creeping things.' Wasps, worms, spiders, snails, cockroaches, black-beetles and woodlice are all objects of interest to me; as to frogs, toads, newts and suchlike, I adore them from their funny, frisky tadpole babyhood up to croaking maturity, but it seems to me that one might easily have too much, even of them. I always eat fricasseed frogs regretfully; they remind one so much of miniature human thighs, and make one feel cannibalistic and horrid; still a plague of frogs must have been, to put it mildly, just a trifle uncom-

fortable, though not 'in it' where 'lice, flies and all creeping things' are concerned. Of course it's very unorthodox, but I never can quite see why all these horrors were not confined strictly to Pharaoh, his magicians and his counsellors. How should we like it if all sorts of plagues descended upon us each time there was a Radical Ministry in power? The bulk of those wretched Egyptians had just as little to do with the oppressions of the Israelites as we had with the Bill for the Disestablishment of the English Church. Justice may well be represented as a blind goddess, apparently! But to return to the pigs. The Hungarian pig is a speciality. If you were to search the wide world over, you could not find an animal dirtier, more repulsive, or more intelligent than he is, whether he be black, red or white.(?) His long, lean body is covered thickly with long, shaggy, matted hair full of live stock, and he delights to wallow or roll in everything that is 'of the most disgusting.' There is one swineherd for the whole village. Every morning he goes out on to the square accompanied by his boy and a couple of dogs, blows a horn vociferously and waits. Instantly such a squealing and grunting arises as never was. Out of every gate dashes a boisterous pig or two, running at the top of his speed and followed by his squealing youngsters, if he has any. In five minutes every pig in the place is standing in grunting expectation round the swineherd, who then sets off out into the woods with his porcine train behind him. During the whole day he leads them about or sits on the ground with one of his favourites beside him; in the evening he brings them back, blows his horn again, and the same scene is reproduced. Helter-skelter go the

squealing, grunting mob, and no one of them ever mistakes his home; though I once found a half-grown piggie rushing wildly about in a Transylvanian forest vainly hunting for the vanished herd in a state of terror and dismay that was pitiable. He finally consented, however, to follow me back, and his squeals of delight when he caught sight of his native village were simply ear-piercing. It is a most absurd sight to see a couple of these dirty monsters nestling up to the swineherd to have their huge ugly polls scratched, and lying down, literally, in his lap with subdued grunts of contentment during the operation. Swineherds are evidently not afflicted with sensitive skins.

Hungary is like Spain, you cannot generalise upon it. Each locality has its own local customs, many of them quaint and touching. In the district round Pázmánd it is the custom on All Souls' Day to decorate the graves of departed friends elaborately with wreaths and crosses of anything and everything, from wild flowers and everlastings to tinsel, tin, paper, and bead wreaths. Candles, too, with or without glass globes over them, are burned round the tombs, and prayers are muttered with the aid of a rosary. Afterwards, just about dusk, the whole population repair to the church, where a solemn Mass for the dead is performed in the dim light of a few smoky oil-lamps. Neither this, however, nor the sniffly, nasal performances of the choir, could detract from a certain poetic solemnity in this service in the plain, white-washed edifice filled by a purely peasant congregation—a solemnity that has been often wanting in many a big cathedral.

CHAPTER III

Budapest—Lohengrin—Ice fêtes and hot springs—The Greek Church on the Petöfy Square—A Slav wife-beater—The Margit-sziget—The Spring races—The Emperor Franz Joseph.

NOTWITHSTANDING the brand of 'trade' upon these good people, I arranged to spend the winter with them, so we packed up our belongings and moved off to their town residence about the middle of December. The house we lived in was one of their own; it stood in the oldest square, and we occupied the first floor. It was not a very fashionable quarter, though one of the Teleki palaces stood on the opposite corner. From some of the windows we could just get a glimpse of the Danube, but otherwise this flat had little to recommend it. The entrance was smelly, the staircase narrow and dark, the rooms small and not very conveniently placed—still, I liked it on the whole. A physiologist once told me: 'There is a large amount of adaptability in your character.' Perhaps he was right. It is wonderful how quickly I can accommodate myself to circumstances and feel happy. *In*stability of character, severe moralists might say. Perhaps they are right also. Who knows? So much depends upon the point of view, doesn't it? A grain of dust appears very insignificant lying on the roadway, but its insignificance is over when it settles down in the corner of your eye.

My detestation of guide-books is such that nothing would induce me to describe a city, in case I might fall into the regulation style. Beautiful buildings always appeal to me, and a Gothic arch brings with it a sense of soul satisfaction indescribable; but my ignorance of architecture and architectural terms is lamentable. Besides, no description, however minute, ever gives anybody an adequate idea of a place. It only enables you to form a picture in your own mind, which is absolutely certain to be as unlike the reality as possible.

Well, assisting other people to form wrong impressions is not going to be my vocation in life, so I shall only say that Budapest is one of the loveliest cities in Europe. If there should be any mortal so ill-advised as to question this statement, let him go there and see for himself.

The royal castle with its hanging gardens winding down sunny slopes to the river's bank is not quite *our* idea of a royal castle. It is white-washed. But what of that? Are we the arbiters of the canons of beauty and suitability for all the nations of this round world?

The grey old fortress, crowning the rocky heights of the Gellerthegy, is grim and grey enough to fill the sternest Puritan with chastened satisfaction, and its history is brave enough to stir the pulses of every veteran warrior. How many barbarian hordes has it not withstood? One after the other, its massive walls have borne the breaches of Huns, Magyars, Tartars, Turks, and Russians; not to mention the ranks of the modern Honvéds and the troops of Imperial Austria during the memorable years of '48 and '49. Yet there it stands to-day, as firm and steadfast as it stood ten

centuries ago. Its breaches repaired, its coats of mail, and its bows and arrows exchanged for heavy 'guns' and brilliant uniforms. The broad flood of the rapid, rolling Danube still washes its base now as it did in the day when priestly Gellert was hurled into its depths from the top of the lofty, overhanging crags. How many a tale of love and war that noble river must have carried to his distant sweetheart, the serene Black Sea!

On the hills between the castle and the fortress I have spent many a long day. Being by nature a 'country-mouse,' the city wearies me, even in winter, after a very short time. A feeling of imprisonment takes possession of me. I sometimes wonder, by the way, whether one of my remote Norman ancestors, who were some of them a little wild, could ever by any chance have brought a strain of gipsy blood into the family. If so, that would account for my rooted hatred of conventionalities, and my passionate delight in the broiling sun, the howling storm, the boisterous sea, the echoing thunder, the moonlight shadows, and the feathery snow. How I love them all! There are hours in my life when communion with Nature is a necessity to me. It is then that I arise and flee away to the nearest desert, or the neighbouring forest, or the mountain summit, which calls aloud: 'Come up here! Come up here! I have somewhat to show thee, somewhat to say unto thee!'

In Hungary it is not the proper thing for an unmarried girl to move a step alone; her goings out and comings in must always be attended by a governess or a maid. However, not being a Hungarian, I maintained my own native privileges, and went about independent

of a duenna. An Englishwoman can do things, almost anywhere, with immunity, that might be fraught with dangers for a native. Our reputation amongst the Magyars is a high one. We are held to be 'distinguished' in our manners, irreproachable in our moral characters, and too-altogether-angelic in our general conduct for anything except the most distant of worship. Our fair hair, our blue eyes, and our pink and white complexion call forth admiration; but, we are too cold for the popular taste.

Therefore when civilisation palled upon me I used to put on my furs and make a sojourn amongst the hills. Ah! those Buda hills! Their northern steeps are like Siberia in winter; their southern slopes are like Sicily in summer. The wild fig grows and ripens there in the clefts of the Bloeksberg. Vineyards are everywhere, and wine is, to quote the words of the Hungarian poet Garay, 'the juice of the hills.' At some of the tiny inns up there I have tasted wines, nameless and without brand, that seemed full of living sunshine, and acted like a magic elixir on my frozen blood and tired limbs. A glass of wine and a slice of black carraway bread have often given me renewed energy to face the icy air and climb down again to the chain suspension-bridge that stretched like a cobweb across the mile of frozen river lying between me and Pest in the plain, standing out with its myriad lights clear against the dark, distant mountains that bounded the horizon. After these excursions I would change my tweed knickers for lace-trimmed petticoats and return with fresh zest to the amenities of social life. We used to spend three evenings weekly at the opera; the other evenings were generally devoted to the

theatre or to an occasional *soirée*. Once, at a birthday party, I had the pleasure of making Franz Liszt's acquaintance, and hearing him play two solos on the pianoforte. He was such a handsome, white-haired old fellow that I scarcely wondered at the infatuation of the French Countess for her fascinating genius. Here it would perhaps be as well to confess that I also fell in love—not with Franz Liszt, but with *Lohengrin*—on the stage. Off the stage he became metamorphosed into a tall, fresh-coloured Italian with a fat, vulgar wife, neither of whom appealed to me in the least, but as *Elsa's* lover he was an ideal. However, he failed to reach my standard as *Raoul* in *Les Huguenots*, so that illusion soon died a natural death. At the Folks theatre, where popular pieces are always played, you get a good deal of information respecting the life of the lower classes. It was there that I learned how to dance the *csárdás*, theoretically. This knowledge proved useful to me when put into practice, as you will learn later on.

There was an All Fools ball at the *Redoute* on the last night of carnival, our Shrove Tuesday; everybody wore fancy-dress or dominoes, and the fun waxed fast and furious till midnight, when 'all the world' scrambled home and put on Lenten sackcloth (metaphorically). The *Redoute* occupied the other side of our square, and across a narrow street, opposite my window, a gigantic paper fool stretched his legs, like a huge Colossus, forming an archway under which all the revellers passed. I wanted to swell the number, out of pure curiosity, but was persuaded to give up the idea, and regretted this later on when I discovered that *all* the men go openly, and many high-born ladies *sub*

rosa. A pink or lilac domino is most becoming and, like charity, it covers a multitude of sins, apparently. After stopping to watch most of the maskers arrive, on my way for a quiet stroll beside the Danube, I paced up and down the moonlit Corso for an hour listening abstractedly to the music, the shouts and the laughter behind me. This favourite promenade consists of a double avenue of acacia trees running along between the stone steps of the embankment and a row of tall, handsome houses, broken here and there by big squares with statues and gardens. It extends for a couple of miles on each side of the river, and looks most fairylike when all the lamps on each side are alight. Boats glide noiselessly up and down the dark water with coloured lamps at their bows, and little steam-launches paddle backwards and forwards continually across the ferries. In April and May the acacias are covered with long, sweet-smelling trails of pink, white, or cream blossoms, from which, by the way, a curious kind of cake is made and much eaten. The Corso is delightful at all seasons and at any hour, but a solitary walk there on a clear starry night is exceptionally enjoyable. You require to see, feel, and literally breathe in the whole scene without anybody to disturb you by a word. Of course, these nocturnal promenades were looked upon as one of those 'mad English ways' that are very mad indeed. Not but what I was always permitted to 'gae my ain gait.' Everybody allowed me that. Indeed, it seemed to me sometimes as though the whole nation had conspired to spoil me during my residence amongst them. The bond of family affection is a very close one in Hungary, and the evidences of my bereavement undoubtedly made me in their eyes rather a pathetic

study in black and white. (Please laugh, just for once! I don't often perpetrate this sort of thing.)

Whilst the frost lasted, we skated daily in the enclosure round the picturesque ice-pavilion, erected at the edge of the lake in the Hyde Park of Budapest. A splendid military band and a fascinating gipsy troupe used to play turn about whilst we glided up and down, round and round, over the glassy surface of the water. Scores of men were employed constantly to keep it in the state of perfection demanded by the members of this very exclusive skating club, the subscription to which, however, was only a couple of pounds for the whole season. Directly the pavilion closed at night the ice was scraped, swept, and flooded from the natural hot springs by means of a long hose. A most excellent plan, but only practicable, of course, where there is an unlimited supply of very hot water always on hand. Budapest is a wonderful place for mineral springs, hot and cold. You can have baths at any temperature all the year round at any of the big beautifully fitted-up bathing establishments for a very trifling sum. The Romans, I was told (or the Turks), used to call Buda *Bude-les-Bains*, but why they should have chosen to speak French upon that occasion didn't seem quite clear either to me or my informant. Several kinds of mineral water are largely exported now. Hunyadi-János, Franz-Josef, Apollinaris, and many other kinds all come from the Hungarian capital. Some of them have rather a nice flavour and are very good for the complexion because they contain arsenic, others are extremely nasty. There's one kind that smells exactly like plum-pudding stewing in beef-broth. It boils apparently over some subterranean fire beneath the

city, for you may constantly smell it and see volumes of steam issuing forth whenever you pass any of the big gratings over the hydrants in the streets from which it is drawn up and carted round to private houses. Though my feminine curiosity is very great, it has never yet been great enough to tempt me into tasting this volcanic production, but I dare say it isn't bad—for those who like that sort of thing.

Between whiles we paid calls, so I made a few acquaintances, most of whom could speak English more or less. Two of those who spoke it more were Count Albert Apponyi and Dezsö Szilágyi. The latter had spent a good deal of time in England—for political reasons—before his elevation to the post of minister of justice, so it was perhaps not surprising that he should speak with ease, fluency and a good accent; but the radical Count, who is one of the idols of 'the people,' has learned our language entirely in his own country, yet he speaks it perfectly. There is a proverb that 'lookers-on see most of the game.' That proverb is truer than most proverbs, it seems to me, and certainly a 'looker-on' has one great advantage over the players in any game. A 'looker-on' need never take sides. You may see everything, hear everything, discuss everything, and still continue to remain on terms of friendship with all the parties concerned. That has been my experience at least. When there was anything very interesting on at the House of Commons we used to get tickets for the gallery, which, be it said, is not a wild beasts' den, such as that to which women are relegated at St. Stephen's. On Sunday mornings we invariably went to service at the Greek church, on the square opposite to the frowning fortress. In the

middle of it there is a statue of the young poet-patriot, Sándor Petöfy, who fell at the battle of Schässburg in the flower of youth, love, and genius. Every Sunday going into church I hated the Austrians with a bitter hatred; coming out of church I again shook my fist at them, metaphorically. You ask why? Well, just now I told you that a looker-on is not obliged to take sides, yet I am always obliged, by some stupid, unaccountable instinct, to take sides with the oppressed and hate the oppressors; in spite of which I am a staunch Conservative. You may believe it or not, as you like, but I detest Radicals, though my fondness for the peasantry of many nations is very pronounced; but 'the People' (spelt with a big P) finds neither sympathy nor support with me. *Vox populi vox Dei* is all nonsense in my opinion, besides being distinctly blasphemous. Good gracious! Only to think of it! What an obnoxious, unreasonable, selfish, fickle voice some folk would try to make out the Almighty's to be!

There is also another square in Budapest that always makes me boil over with indignation. It is the place where that butcher Haynau publicly whipped lots of high-born Magyar dames, 'to take the spirit out of them,' less than fifty years ago. Each time I passed through it I honestly and fervently regretted that the London draymen who mobbed him afterwards had not been permitted to work their will upon the red-faced, red-handed tyrant, who slaughtered hundreds without rhyme or reason, merely to slake his own thirst for revenge. They were not my ancestors whom he had butchered, it is true, but they were men and women struggling for freedom and national life. Whenever I read Petöfy's account of that memorable March day

when he and his fellows 'made history,' a flood of regret pours over my soul. Why was I not destined to stand beside him in the fray? Like Madame Jokai and her husband, I should have followed him to the battle-fields, sharing with him and his men the ambuscades and bivouacs, the flights, victories, and perils. Like her, too, I could have helped to bind up wounds, make cartridges and concoct savoury stews, if nothing else.

What scenes they must have gone through together during those long, long months of suspense, when joy and fear, exultation and despair, alternated with each other! A nation hardy and vigorous was struggling for its very breath against terrible odds, yet Western Europe looked on. What wonder that Madame Jokai became the greatest tragic actress of her times? An old Greek said centuries ago that to see a good man struggling with adversity is a sight fit for the gods. Did England and Germany and all Northern Europe consider themselves 'the gods' just then, I wonder? France, of course, had enough to do in her own land.

Those days, however, are passed; possibly their interference would have been of no avail either.

À propos of interference, I once horrified my friends most terribly on this point. We had walked one morning a couple of miles along the banks of the Danube outside the city, and came across a Slav peasant castigating his young wife with a leathern strap. This sight awoke the lust of murder in my heart. I felt just like King Saul must have felt when he hurled the javelin at David. Fortunately for everybody concerned, there was no javelin in my hand; nothing, in fact, except a muff. But, purple with indignant rage, I sprang upon

the man and shook him by the collar like a terrier shaking a rat. He was so astonished that his arm fell to his side, whilst he and his victim both stared open-mouthed at the fire-flashing orbs and scarlet visage of the foreign lady of whose fluent flow of words neither of them understood a single syllable. Still, the husband evidently understood the gist of the argument, for he put the strap round his own waist and buckled it, ere the end of my peroration. How people made fun of me over that, and how many lectures were given me on the stupidity of interfering between man and wife! Upon cooler reflection I decided they were right. It *is* a stupid thing to do. Moral: Keep cool under all circumstances.

The interior of a Greek church always strikes 'Westerners' as being very un-churchlike. The nave is empty except for a sort of altar-tomb. Round the walls of the side aisles *prie-Dieu* are placed for the use of the male portion of the congregation. The chancel is completely shut off by a high screen of gilt-work and oil paintings (very lovely in design and execution), in the centre of which is a gate of iron scroll-work, hung inside with triple curtains of blue, purple, and white. These are drawn back at certain points of the service to permit a small glimpse of the many-pillared altar within, round which the priest perambulates, intoning prayers. No organ or instrument of any kind except a tuning-fork to start the choir with is used, but the singing is always exceptionally beautiful. The singers sit in an oaken gallery at the west end, immediately over what I used to designate as the court of the women, also having *prie-Dieu* round its walls. No images are allowed, but sacred pictures called *eikons* are placed in

various positions to be kissed by the congregation before leaving. The Greek ritual is quite unlike that of any other faith, but the actual tenets seem to me to be a sort of compromise between those of the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. They have some rites and ceremonies that met with my heartiest approval. For instance, on Palm Sunday, the whole of the nave is thickly strewn with fresh-cut grass full of buttercups and daisies. At the close of the service branches of consecrated palm are distributed by the priest—for a consideration. The verger stands beside him with a big plate, on which you lay your offering. The size of your branch depends upon the value of your contribution. These palms are taken home and hung up over the bed until the next year, being carefully dusted every morning. The ceremonies on Good Friday and Easter Sunday are quite as elaborate and magnificent as those in the Roman Catholic churches, which is saying a good deal.

There is an English Presbyterian place of worship in Moon Street. I went there once, but the pastor was such a living image of what Don Quixote must have been like, that I could neither attend to the prayers nor listen to the extremely long, dull sermon. Visions of Rosinante and Dulcinea, of Sancho Panza and the giant windmills, *would* keep filling my mind. At the French Protestant church there was a remarkably eloquent preacher, who reminded me of Cardinal Manning. Musty old Roman Catholic edifices, with the odorous breath of centuries of incense smoke hanging about their dusky interiors, always possess a great attraction for me, and I often spent an odd half-hour in one or the other of those to be met with in

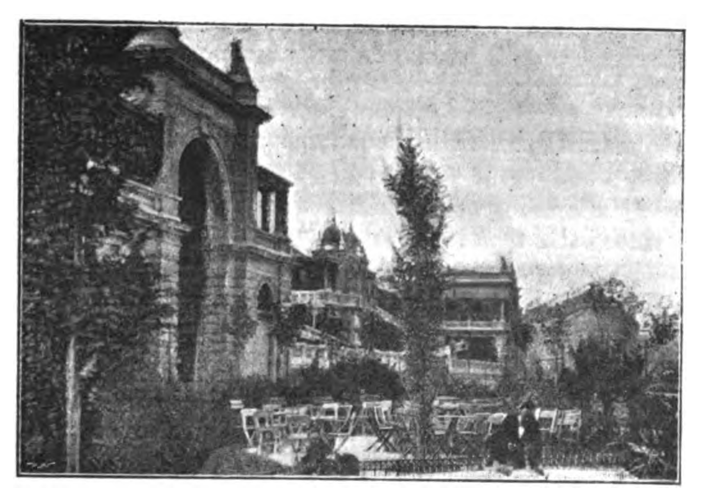
various parts of Buda and Pest. Sometimes I went at the fashionable hour and bowed my head amidst a throng of the *élite*; sometimes I went to the people's Mass and sang out of the same big black hymn-book with a peasant woman or an artisan's wife, many of whom appeared to be truly devout, though they one and all made me feel sick—not by their piety, but by the boiled butter with which they are in the habit of greasing their abundant locks. It is the most popular kind of pomade all over Hungary, and is always put on fresh for Sundays and saints' days. On this account, going to church in this country is generally rather a sickening process.

After having done their religious *devoirs* in the way of Mass, all the world feels at liberty to devote the remainder of the day to enjoyment. Most of the great races are run on Sunday afternoons; it is also the favourite night for *premières* at the theatres, and the best singers appear at the opera-house on these evenings. The shops are open till twelve, but closed then for the rest of the day, except confectioners, tobacconists, and wine-shops: these do more trade on that afternoon than any other time in the week.

It was the end of March before the snow had all disappeared, and in about a week afterwards the grass of the Városliget (City-wood) was carpeted thickly with sweet-smelling purple violets and modest white daisies. The trees began to bud, and the kiosk on the Corso began to be deserted. Everybody rode, drove, walked, and took *goûter* in the park. Children ran about there gathering bunches of violets with little shrieks of delight, and the bands transferred themselves from the Ice-Pavilion to the island in the middle of the lake. In

less than a month the lilacs and laburnums, the chestnuts and acacias were in full bloom all over the place, and the peasant-women brought huge bunches of tall orange-red *Kaiserkröne* to market. Every other man wore lilies or rosebuds in his button-hole, and we ate new potatoes on Fridays with our fricasseed frogs and plovers' eggs.

On May-day the hospitable little Isle of St.



KIOSK ON CORSO.

Margaret, about two miles up the Danube, opens its fairy-like delights to the public for the summer season. Then 'everybody who is anybody' flocks out there to drink their morning coffee and eat their crisp, golden, buttered *semmel* in the early freshness of the dewy spring mornings. This island belongs to the 'good Archduke,' the Emperor's brother Joseph, who spends large sums annually in keeping it up to its present

state of horticultural perfection. You should just see the archways of honeysuckle and purple clematis later on, and the wealth of roses too! It is perhaps a mile long and half a mile broad. The green foliage of its birches and its weeping willows dip into the blue of the rolling river delightfully on three sides. On the fourth side a fall of hot sulphur-water rushes over the steep cliffs, dyeing them a vivid yellow before it reaches the tiny beach, and flows on down into the Danube. On the *Margit-sziget* you may drink or bathe in pretty much any sort of water you choose to name and at any temperature, from the buoyant steel-bath that makes you dream of swimming in champagne to the disgusting black, muddy stuff that is considered 'so good for the skin.' The dainty porcelain baths with three steps leading into each, the big, fluffy sheets and the broad, comfortable divans on which you recline indolently whilst your attendant rubs you dry, are all reminiscences of the days when the luxurious Turk was 'the man in possession.'

The *Csárszár-füred*, a large swimming-bath at Buda, is, I was told, an actual relic of the Turkish invaders. About the middle of May people begin to construct the numerous floating establishments for swimming and bathing in the Danube. These, of course, deal only in cold water, and are therefore not patronised before the end of the month. April and May are both a little 'trying' to foreigners, so far as climate is concerned. A hot, sirocco-like wind often blows across the country in a way that seems to take a good deal out of you. The asphalt pavements become so hot that a small flash of lightning seems to shoot up your legs each time you make a step upon them.

The streets in Budapest, by the way, are most of them frightfully noisy. They are macadamised with round blocks of wood, filled in with sand beaten hard, and the rattle made by vehicles is terrific.

Every shop has its own particular signboard, often of the quaintest description. Many of them have life-size figures painted on them in the most gorgeous and realistic of styles; some of them serve as a kind of illustrated catalogue of the goods to be procured within, and all the shops are shut up for an hour or two in the middle of the day whilst the owner and his *employés* go to dine and play a game of dominoes or discuss the daily papers. Pest is distinctly Hungarian in its character and people, but Buda is rather German. It is the antithesis of Pest in every respect. Instead of the bustling, modern city you leave behind you in crossing the suspension-bridge, you find a quaint, primitive, silent, sleepy place, where the antiquated condition of the shops, inhabitants, and houses strikes you more and more forcibly at every step. They all seem to be at least a couple of centuries behind those in the twin-city across the way. This contrast is very piquant to a foreigner. It is not everywhere in Europe that you can step so easily back into the seventeenth century—is it?

The royal palace is peculiar, too, for in a land where individuality is so strong it is absolutely wanting in the smallest sign of individual taste, so far as its interior is concerned. The façade is simply magnificent, and the hanging gardens charming, but except the mauve colour of the hangings in the Empress's private apartments, there is absolutely nothing to denote the individual taste of the dwellers therein. Not a picture, not a statue,

not a bronze, not a single article of *vertu* of any kind. This absence of so much that goes towards making life beautiful was a problem to my mind. The Emperor is as much a soldier as the Kaiser Wilhelm, and the Empress is a good deal given to sport, but they are neither of them by any means devoid of artistic tastes and appreciation.

Nobody goes much to the theatres after March. Supper-parties on the Island or in the open courtyards of one of the two big hotels, where the rival gipsy-bands perform, are greatly in vogue, especially on the days when any great race has been run. The splendid race-course is out beyond the *Városliget* and the Emperor and Empress generally patronise it two or three times during the Spring Meetings. Racing is confined almost exclusively to the upper and middle classes in Hungary, though it is always attended by numbers of the *demi-monde*. The latter have an enclosure to themselves and do not mingle with the *grandes dames*. Between the various 'events' on the programme, that lawn often presents an animated scene, the 'correct' attire of the men acting as a splendid foil for the rather striking costumes of the women.

The Empress, though devoted to horses, is anything but 'horsey' in appearance. Her figure is exquisite, her hair and eyes lovely, even now. In the days of her youth she must certainly have been the very embodiment of a fairy queen. The Emperor is tall, dignified, and kingly-looking, but not handsome; very polished in his manners and much beloved by his subjects of all nationalities. When he came to the throne at eighteen years of age, he is said to have exclaimed regretfully: 'Oh! ma jeunesse, ma jeunesse, tu es passée!' He had

already learnt that it is no joke being an Emperor-King nowadays, especially in a realm where your subjects speak a dozen or two distinct languages and are each imbued with a distinct set of national prejudices all their own, not to mention a national flag and their own particular notions of patriotism. But each year has brought him increased wisdom; by degrees he and his ministers have discovered that a let-alone policy on many points is the safest; so, like wise men, they have given up trying to Austrian-ise the whole kingdom, and allowed each nationality to wave its own flag beside the black and yellow of the Hapsburg family banner. Peace and prosperity is the result. A great diplomatist once told me: 'If you are in doubt what to do, do nothing; the situation will generally resolve itself.' This is not such a bad axiom—in some cases.

CHAPTER IV

Transylvania—An ancient metropolis—A charming old lady and a bit of her history—Fleas—Midnight musings and what came of them—Ilka, the actress—The woman who lived in a glass case—The fortress on the hill at Kolozsvár—Myself as a modern Absalom—*Katona* to the rescue.

One lovely night early in June I stepped into the train at Pest to start off with the family of a well-known Count for a summer 'beyond the forest.' He was the Vice-president of the House of Commons, a director of the *Staatsbahn*, a clever politician and an influential Peer. His wife was an amiable, cultured woman, an extra-lady of honour to the Empress-Queen, when in Hungary, and a celebrated beauty. Their only child, a girl of sixteen years, was as clever, as beautiful, and as lovable as the daughter of such a couple was likely to be. We left the metropolis about nine o'clock one evening and found ourselves at Kolozsvár (the ancient capital of the country) about seven o'clock the next morning. Our party had the whole of a corridor-carriage to themselves. How thoroughly I enjoyed rushing across the broad *Alföld*, as the great plain of Hungary is called, on a balmy starlit night. Towards morning sleep overcame me, but I woke up again after a short nap, just in time to see the sun rising gloriously behind a dark forest of oak trees. I love to watch the world wake up in summer and to breathe in the invigorating freshness of a golden dawn.



KOLOZSVÁR

On reaching Kolozsvár, a quaint old town built up and down over several hills, embowered in trees and having the most picturesque of covered wooden bridges over its two little bustling rivers, we drove off through the narrow unpaved streets to the big, old-fashioned mansion of the aged Countess R—— for a few days' visit before going on into the country. It was here that some of my most tragi-comic experiences took place. The ground floor of the mansion was occupied entirely by shops of various kinds. The family lived on the first floor, and the second floor was let. A large room with two windows looking on to the street was apportioned to me, and after having drunk some of the usual delicious coffee I lay down on the broad shiny leather sofa for a nap. Later on I got up, dressed, and started out to explore the city, rhapsodise over the afore-mentioned bridges and fervently wish that Heaven had seen fit to make me an artist. I *can* paint beautifully indeed, but—I can't *draw*. It's so easy to say: 'Fix your point of sight, and then draw everything exactly as you see it; all the lines above go up, all those below go down.' I always *do* fix my point of sight and follow these directions, but the results are not as successful as my patience and perseverance would fain behold. If there is any royal road to perspective, will some one please be kind enough to initiate me into it, without delay, bearing in mind the fact that I am as stupid as an owl and never could abide Euclid or geometry. Kolozsvár is undoubtedly of a most 'paintable' character; but Cologne is nothing to it in the way of malodours. Sewerage and sanitary officers are unknown luxuries, an open sewer runs down the middle of the principal thoroughfares beside the lines of the

electric tramway, and electric lights assist you in your efforts to keep your shoes unsoiled when trying to pick your way across the side streets at night. Whether these gutters empty themselves into the rivers, or not, is a moot point. I hope not, for you constantly see groups of women standing knee-deep in the water near the bridges, washing piles of clothing by beating it with stones or flat blocks of wood, and rinsing it in the rushing tide of the boisterous mountain streams. After our two o'clock dinner and a smoke, the old Countess took me to drive and drink iced coffee with her under the lime-trees in the park, where a band of gipsies discoursed the usual delightful music. She was one of the most charming old ladies it has ever been my good fortune to meet anywhere. Eighty-three years of age and almost a cripple from some scrofulous disease in her feet, she was yet as bright, as gay, and as much up-to-date as any nineteenth-century girl, vividly interested in politics, art, and every question of the day, and full of the most interesting of reminiscences. She had been all through the 1848 Revolution, of course; had divorced her first husband in a fit of jealousy and gone on loving him all her life; had married *en secondes noces* a lineal descendant of the royal line of Transylvania and lived with him fifteen years of quiet domesticity before he joined the great majority, leaving her a still-youthful widow with two daughters. Her first husband had also remarried and become a widower, and his heart now turned again towards the memory of the beautiful young wife whose wonderful blue eyes had made him call her 'My flax-blossom!' One fine day these two *divorcées* met by accident, were reconciled, and 'courted' each other for the rest of

their lives. He is still a dainty old beau, just like a Rococo Marquis. She, alas! lies quiet in the family vault.

It was 'quite a poem' to watch them when he came to pay his visits, bringing with him a bouquet or a *bonbonnière* to present as he bent over her wrinkled hand, and kissed her shrivelled cheek with tender grace. He was always so full of delicate little compliments and pretty little attentions to her, which produced a pink flush in her aged cheeks and a gratified sparkle in her faded eyes, that seemed to bring back to her face the ghost of its former loveliness in a marvellous manner. When she lay dying, less than two years later, he was continually by her side, and at the Benediction Service over her embalmed corpse his sobs were heart-rending. Was there a tinge of remorse in them, I wonder?

At eight o'clock in the evening an elaborate hot supper was served, followed by tiny cups of genuine mocha and tinier glasses of *chartreuse* in the smoking-room; then I retired to my own room, anticipating a good long night's rest. It occurred to me, whilst my hair was being brushed, that everything in this life depends upon contrast. To the tired rest is a luxury; to the restless it is merely a penance. How many a time had the word 'bed' struck upon my ear with a ring of distaste! Now, it seemed of all sounds the most welcome. With a deep breath of satisfaction my head sank down on to the lace-trimmed pillows, and I kicked the crimson silk quilt in its snowy coverlet carelessly on one side with a tired foot.

A couple of minutes passed, and then—the trouble began. It is difficult for some people to connect tragedy and fleas together, but I am not one of those fortunate

people. *Experientia docet.* At first, only two or three began to roam stealthily over my defenceless limbs; these were evidently the vanguard sent on to reconnoitre. Being very sleepy, I gave several vicious rubs and pinches at haphazard and pretended that so few did not signify. There was a pause in their evolutions, and I—silly mortal!—drowsily rejoiced in the idea that they did not consider my blood 'sweet' enough for their depraved tastes, and had therefore retired in search of 'pastures new.' This illusion was a short-lived one, however. They had merely gone to fetch 'their sisters, their cousins, whom they reckoned up by dozens, and their aunts' to join the feast and take part in the races. Up and down, round and round, they careered, taking nips now and again in a playful sort of way. I lay still and shuddered for several seconds. Extreme fatigue reconciles one to many things. But the smell of human blood seemed to have driven them crazy, so springing out of bed I lighted a candle and did a little hunting on my own responsibility. Over the slippery linen sheet, under the pillows, up my sleeves, across my back they sprang till I felt myself going positively mad. I made eleven 'kills,' then with difficulty I managed to drag the tightly tucked sheet off the mattress and shake it vigorously outside one of the windows. After that I slipped off my nightgown, rolled it in a bundle, threw it into the furthest corner of the room and took a clean one out of my portmanteau. Then, thoroughly wakeful by this time, I lay down feeling that I had taken a fitting revenge and got the better of the nasty little beasties. Never did woman make a greater mistake! Before ten minutes had elapsed another army of the demoniacal little monsters were dancing all over me.

With a groan of dismay, I danced too, and if a mild oath or two escaped my frantic lips, it is to be hoped that the recording angel took the circumstances into due consideration before scoring them down to my account. Then a happy thought struck me—Eau de Cologne. Perhaps they would get dead-drunk upon it and go home to sleep off the debauch. Out of bed again. Another bout of hunting and shaking; another nightgown flung into another corner. I proceeded to deluge myself and my bed with Cologne-water and lay down to wait further developments. It used up about a shillingsworth of scent, but then, sleep would be cheap at that price, I argued. Oh! vanity of vanities! Is anything more deceitful than hope of rest when fleas are around? Scarcely had the odour of the extinguished candle mingled with the fumes of the scent before fresh legions marched up to the attack and, as though stimulated by the spirituous atmosphere, began to devour me piecemeal. I was beaten—unmistakably beaten, and by foes that were beneath contempt. A terrible despair crept over my senses, paralysing for the nonce every faculty. What was to be done? My supply of nightgowns had given out. In tones of bitterest reproach, I sat up in bed scrubbing my body all over violently, and began hurling Shakespeare at the head of Morpheus:

> 'Oh sleep! gentle sleep, Nature's soft nurse,
> How have I frighted thee, that thou no more
> Will weigh mine eyelids down and steep my senses
> In forgetfulness (of these arch-demons)?'

But it was no good. Morpheus seemed merely to point a long finger downwards (I had appealed to him through the ceiling) and ejaculate in answer, 'Impossible!'

It was at this moment when the tragedy was deepest that the comic side of the situation struck me. Still rubbing without cessation, I went off into peals of senseless laughter.

Since my foes were unmoved by either tears, prayers or laughter, retreat was the only course left open to me.

A third nightgown went into a third corner, and I stood still to meditate. Just at this critical point, the fawn check of my 'Mack' caught my roving eye. It was an inspiration. Wrapping my still shuddering form in its friendly folds I sat down on the window-seat and prepared to spend the night 'in maiden meditation, fancy free.' It stood open to its widest, and I began to reconnoitre the street. The moon was already setting, the stars were beginning to pale; in an hour at most the grey dawn would come stealing up to grow rosy with joy at the first smile of her sweetheart, the Sun-god. A solitary pedestrian in full evening garb came rolling gracefully along down the side-walk, hustled a lamp-post, took off his hat to it with a grave and elaborate apology, and continued his way perfectly unconscious of anything abnormal in his behaviour. For a short space silence reigned after his unsteady footsteps had died away. I mused on men; on wine, woman and song; on heaven and earth and the judgment-day. Presently my musings were disturbed. The man who slept under his counter in the shop *au rez de chaussée* opened his door for a breath of air and took a turn outside. During his absence the slow, slouching step of a Wallach, rag-swathed foot became audible under my window. Leaning forward, I saw him with his furry peaked cap and his sheepskin cloak that gave

him rather the appearance of a big black bear. At the shop door, standing ajar at so unseasonable an hour, he paused; whether out of pure curiosity or a desire to annex anything that might be handy has always remained a doubtful point in my mind, and screwed himself into all sorts of geometrical patterns, trying to see whether it was unoccupied or not. The returning steps of the man in charge caused him to desist abruptly however. He crossed the street noiselessly, retired into the shadow of a doorway, and awaited the course of events from a safe distance. Directly the shop door shut upon its owner he went on his way too. I wondered what a Wallach could be doing in the streets at that hour, and alone too, but my wonderings were cut short. A noisy party of 'undergrads' (for Kolozsvár boasts a university) came swinging down the street. One of them chanced to notice me. There was a dead stop opposite the window. A moment later seven hats were off with a flourish, and seven hilarious young men were making seven ironical bows to a dim figure of undefined outline at a first-floor window. Then laughing foolishly, as young men will, they also went their way.

Another interval for meditation, then came three young Magyars returning either from a serenade or a wedding-feast, armed with violin, cello and czimbalom. That they had not stinted themselves in the matter of amber wine was very evident. They could all walk straight, but the way in which they strolled along through the empty streets playing and singing drinking songs was, at one and the same time, a delight and a revelation to me. For the first time in my life I saw men *gloriously* drunk. Of course I had often seen men

lying drunk by the roadside, or reeling home swearing, in my native place—England is famous for that sort of thing—but this phase of drunkenness was quite a new one to me. They were undoubtedly genuinely happy—



MARKET-DAY, KOLOZSVÁR

for the time. Did a headachy Nemesis ever overtake them, I wonder? The sound of their voices and instruments had barely died away in the distance before the peasant carts began rattling in to the early morning markets. The Sun-god, recognising me as an ardent

worshipper, bounded into view just opposite my window, bathing the world in golden light. A thrush awoke on the other side of a garden-wall, then a blackbird took up the strain and an army of small twitterers joined in the chorus. With falling eyelids I inhaled the freshness and exulted in the joy of living, but presently fatigue overcame every other feeling, and throwing myself into the depths of an easy-chair I fell asleep. When the maid brought in my coffee at eight o'clock she found me there and cried out: 'Das gnädige Fräulein ist denn auf und im Regenmantel gekleidet? Mein Gott! Was heisst denn dies, ich bitte? Und die Nachthemden in jedem Ecke, so?'

'Fleas,' I replied laconically, going off to sleep again without further parley.

She put the tray down and departed, probably under the impression that English people are born lunatics.

About ten o'clock I woke, rang for hot coffee and went into details for her edification.

How she laughed! How everybody laughed when they heard it! How could there be a summer in Transylvania without dust, and how could there be dust without fleas? they enquired amusedly. It was the same everywhere, more or less—less in the country, more in the towns. Il faut s'y accoutumer! But I never could 'accustom' myself, so I bathed daily in a copious lather of strong carbolic soap, powdered my bed with Keating, sprinkled it with eucalyptus oil and slept in peace, as a rule.

The next few days were spent exploring the town; inspecting the white-washed fortress on the summit of the highest hill, and the old rocky caves where people used to hide their valuables in troublous times;

strolling through the cemetery; being introduced to the family vaults beneath the *chapelles ardentes*, listening to grisly recitals of corpses who had been robbed of the jewels they were buried in, and had come at midnight to make the fact known to their surviving relatives; and wandering about amongst the market-people, studying their modes of doing business. We went also to the theatres—there are two. I was very anxious to visit the National Theatre at Kolozsvár because it is the training-school from whence most of the best singers and actors emanate. The renowned Ilka Palmai and her first husband graduated there, so did M. and Madame Feleki, now at the National Theatre in Pest. Madame Blaha, Emilia Márkus, Thérèse Csillág and the Viszvárys too, I believe. Ilka Palmai lodged at one time with the people who leased the top story of the R—— mansion (where I was staying), but she and her actor-husband used to be so rowdy and quarrel so dreadfully that the old Countess insisted on their departure. One of the plays I saw in Kolozsvár was Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the other was called *A Czigány Báro* (the Gipsy-baron). It was in the Transylvanian capital, which boasts, by the way, only 20,000 inhabitants, that I made the acquaintance of the most peculiar specimen of womankind that it has ever been my fate to meet anywhere. She is a baroness, who dates her pedigree back for a thousand years pretty well; a childless widow and wealthy. Year in, year out, she sits in her lofty salon attired in the rich, handsome national garb that was *de rigueur* in her ladyship's youth. All the windows are hermetically sealed, the doors hung with heavy *portières*, and she herself enclosed between three tall glass screens. Her

one fixed idea is draughts. When you have convinced the old lady that she is completely shielded from every breath of outer air, you discover that she is a very clever woman, able to talk well on most subjects and possessed of a large share of shrewd common-sense. She is rather proud of her linguistic powers, and speaks four languages with fluency besides her own tongue. She writes Latin faultlessly, and has a good head for business. Her people find that it is quite useless trying to 'cook accounts' with her; yet she has never been outside her apartments for more than twenty years, so she has grown enormously stout. Even in the palmiest days of her youth, Nature had not been kind to her where looks are concerned; now her plain features and the transparent ghastliness of her complexion produce a human visage such as I have never seen elsewhere. On her head she wore a species of velvet cap, on her capacious lap nestled a big Persian pussy, on the little table beside her chair lay a Protestant Bible, a long pipe, a *bonbonnière*, and the latest French novel. She reminded me of some antique white witch who had been preserved (literally) in a glass case for the edification of succeeding generations, except for her voice, which was loud, harsh, and totally lacking in mystery or fascination.

About five o'clock upon the third evening of our stay there, I walked through the town and up to the whitewashed fortress standing on a hill by itself. The view from there right across to the Karpathians is superb. Arrived inside, I sat down on a low stone wall to admire this view and watch the evolutions of an awkward squad doing 'pack-drill' in the barrack yard. After dismissing these, the drill sergeant came up saluting respectfully, and enquired whether he could have the

honour of serving me in any way. Taking this as a polite intimation to state my business and be gone, I told him in a queer medley of German and Hungarian that the view was very fine up there, and that I was a travelling Englishwoman afflicted with a devouring curiosity, and therefore desirous to see how things military were conducted in Transylvania. I also begged him to be good enough to explain to me the meaning of one phrase which had been very frequently on his lips during the evolutions of his men. I repeated this phrase as nearly as I could. Before replying, he looked me up and down, then cleared his throat and remarked tentatively that my knowledge of Hungarian seemed fragmentary. I confirmed this idea, but assured him that my anxiety to learn more of his melodious mother-tongue was immense. He appeared a trifle embarrassed. I repeated the phrase again, looking to him for the translation. Then he began apologetically: 'It would be scarcely credible to the honourable young lady that any human being could be so stupid as a raw recruit. She might figure to herself his extreme stupidity from one instance only. He did not even know the right leg from the left. You were obliged to bind a wisp of straw round one leg, and a wisp of hay round the other, then, instead of shouting "Left! right!" you called out "Szelma! szalma!" to him at drill. Well, in dealing with such veritable oxen of men, was it astonishing that —that—well—sometimes—officers and sergeants alike were constrained to use strong language? Therefore, the honourable young lady would understand that the phrase in question was not quite the sort of thing that he could translate to her, nor yet the sort of words that she would ever be likely to need in her conversation as a foreigner.'

I gravely accepted this explanation and forbore to press the matter, whereupon he volunteered his services to 'show me round,' and proved himself a capital *cicerone*. We continued our conversation amicably in the two languages; he kissed my hand at parting and promised to drink 'my very good health and a safe journey' by the aid of the paper florin which he deigned to accept. Then I assisted myself over the low stone wall before mentioned, and ran gaily down some steep earthworks towards another rough sort of parapet, something in the Scotch deer-fence style. Finding it went down about eight feet on the other side, I got over, prepared to drop into the brambles, and trust to Providence; but my guardian angel must have been napping just then, I fear, or it would have kept me out of those prickly pears. I let go. The next instant my dress became inextricably 'mixed,' so that I couldn't move without tearing it to fragments; my knickers were full of tiny rents, and dozens of prickles were sticking into me all over. Any effort to free myself only seemed to entangle me more. I felt like the biblical ram who was caught in a bramble-bush, and quite inadvertently the phrase which the drill sergeant had excused himself from translating recurred to my memory. Laughter was painful to me, yet the situation was too ridiculous for gravity. A favourite story of my childhood *would* come back to my mind, and I devoutly hoped that no Transylvanian Hans with his 'three whole farthings' would exchange them for a magic instrument and come wandering 'over hill and dale playing his fiddle.' Supposing its witching strains should force me to dance as it had once forced the Jew when placed in a similar position? What was to be done? Nothing, absolutely nothing, but to stand

still till some stray bit of humanity should come within hail. Five minutes passed. My patience began to give out. It was very evident that Nature never intended me to shine as a martyr. At last a measured footstep sounded in the distance.

'Ki van ott ?' I shouted at the top of my voice.

'Katona' (a soldier) came the reply.

'Kerem jöjön ide. Én itt vagyok egyedul. Nem tudom mit csinál.' (Please come here ! I am all alone ! I don't know what to do !)

Not a very intelligible appeal for aid, but I could not for the life of me remember how to say either 'help,' 'caught,' or 'brambles.'

However, it was effectual. The steps came nearer and nearer, then a young man in a private's uniform leaned over the wall and gazed at me with astonished eyes.

'Kerem jöjön ; Nem lehet !' I repeated vaguely, glancing expressively at my gown.

He grasped the situation, and cried :

'Jaj, jaj ! Szegény kisasszony ! Megyek már.' (Alas, alas ! Poor young lady ! I am coming already.)

Then he ran a few steps lower down, took a flying leap over the wall, alighted on the top of a little knoll, lost his footing and rolled to the bottom of the hill. Faint mutterings reached my ear as he toiled up again. Perhaps he was making use of the sergeant's phrase. With all the grave courtesy of a Spanish hidalgo, his bronzed face full of concern, he began to unhook me, but was obliged to have recourse to a ponderous knife to hack away some of the boughs. It was rather a lengthy operation, and his delighted gratitude at the munificent gift of fifty kreutzers as the reward of his labours was pleasant to behold. This amount repre-

sented to him about three days' pay, though it only means something less than a shilling in our coinage. For the future, I carefully eschewed prickly-pear bushes in my 'cross-country' expeditions. Having been blessed with several brothers and accustomed to gymnastics, objects that were insurmountable rarely blocked my path in a region where quickset hedges are unknown. Indeed, I rather pride myself upon being able to run, jump or climb with most people. The one thing that does 'stump' me is a plank bridge over a rapid, swirling current. When it comes to that, 'Nature can no more,' without a guiding hand; but you don't meet with many of these in Hungary. She has her Danube, her Tissa, her Maros, her Szamos and a few others, all of them important enough to possess proper bridges, but she has very few streams or tributary rivers, on the whole. The broad deep ditches between the fields are bridged over here and there by twisted branches filled in with mud. These are easy enough to walk over, but they are very nasty to ride across because they are often full of holes big enough for your horse to catch his foot in. I had a narrow escape of a bad accident in this way once. My steed, *Villám*, got his fore-foot fixed into a hole and went nearly mad with fright and rage before it could be extricated.

CHAPTER V

A Transylvanian village—Forest scenes—*Le petit bleu*—Some aristocratic beauties—*Náczi* as postillion—Masters and servants—Hungarian donkeys—A refractory team and a missing wheel—We are mistaken for Jews—Mosquitoes.

THE Count's carriages from Szt. Mihály-telke came over to Kolozsvár to fetch us, and we set out about eleven o'clock on a lovely morning for a two hours' drive along a white, dusty road. The blueness of the sky reminded one of Italy, the oak and beech forests on either side the road took back my thoughts to Denmark, whilst the little mud huts in the villages we passed through looked very Irish, and the four magnificent horses that drew us brought to my memory the animals in the royal stables at Vienna. In another carriage behind us followed the Parisian governess, the Hungarian tutor, the German *bonne* and the Count's secretary. Behind them again came the two lady's maids and the valet, whilst a couple of carts filled with baggage brought up the rear. A goodly procession for a country road! Of course everybody we met or passed saluted us, and equally of course we each returned their salutations. We reached our destination between one and two o'clock, ravenously hungry and quite ready to enjoy the excellent dinner awaiting us. After black coffee my usual curiosity asserted itself, and I started off to take my bearings, leaving the maid to do my unpacking. The

house itself was an unpretending abode intended only for a summer residence. It lay in a broad, elevated valley. There were hills on three sides of it, and the great, lonely, lovely forest on the fourth. Immediately behind, on a slope separated from the shrubbery merely by the high road, lay the tiny village. The mud cottages were straggled up and down all over the hill and a miniature church crowned the summit, backed by a mass of living green. Behind the village was another and loftier hill; behind that, the forest. In every direction for miles and miles around these same features recurred again and again. A few low bare hills, a wee Wallachian settlement, a little church, and then, the beautiful forest. This tract of forest-land and that other tract of pasture in the Alföld are the two main physical features of Hungary; the Karpathians are only the fringe of Magyarland.

Have you ever danced along over hill and dale as though you were treading on air? The blood coursing through your veins, the air exhilarating you like copious draughts of dry champagne, laughing and singing to yourself for the very joy of living—not because of any particular happiness or good fortune, but merely because the sunbeams dance, the streamlets laugh, the breeze whispers softly to the leaves, and the birds sing in full-throated chorus.

> 'Morning's at seven,
> The grass is dew-pearl'd,
> The lark's on the wing,
> God's in His Heaven,
> All's right with the world!'

This is what I used to feel day after day as I wandered off, sometimes barefooted, through the sweet-smelling

flowery grass to one of my favourite resting-places in that delicious region of mountain and forest. I grew to love them both, with an almost passionate affection, all the deeper, perhaps, because my infant eyes first saw the light chasing the evanescent shadows over snowy mountain-tops. Have you ever lain full-length on an aromatic bed of wild thyme, stretching out a lazy hand now and again to pluck a dainty harebell or a spicy stone-pink within reach; poetising or pondering meanwhile, or singing snatches of folk-songs, your favourite dog beside you, and the balmy breeze-tempered sunshine filling the world with shifting lights, too fleeting and too beautiful for description? I am rather a salamander perhaps, but it was never too hot for me in Transylvania. Every evening at sundown a cold breeze sprang up and heavy dews fell, but we seldom had rain. Roses, *Canna indica*, fuchsias, and gigantic geraniums were almost the only flowers that really flourished in the gardens; these required to be watered daily from a long hose to prevent them getting scorched up; but the fields and woods were carpeted with dozens of different kinds of wild flowers, some of them peculiar to that district only. There was wild mignonette growing everywhere, but alas! it is scentless there. 'Patak roses' of a vivid delicate pink colour and curious in shape and growth. Each blossom has a separate branch to itself, and it is literally 'a rose without thorns.' They grow on straight, stiff little trees about a foot high in damp meadow land, consequently you only find them early in the season. There are many other novelties besides these, but they are nameless to me because of my lamentable ignorance of scientific botany. Poppies, stitchwort and pink campions

are splendid in size and hue. Moon daisies, blue, purple and heliotrope cornflowers, yellow snapdragons, and a few species of orchids used to cry out 'Pick me! pick me!' at the top of their voices perpetually. I did pick them, and made quite a unique reputation for myself by using them for table decorations. Everybody used to exclaim at their beauty, but the idea of utilising wild blossoms and leaves in the house seemed to them a most thoroughly 'English' notion. Hungarians generally leave their flowers, indoors and out, entirely to the taste and discretion of the head gardener, who invariably brings in gigantic bouquets of the very stiffest and most old-fashioned description, using a maximum of bloom to a minimum of foliage. One or two of these, placed in enormous old wide-mouthed china vases (worth a king's ransom to a 'china-maniac'), grace the dinner-table always, standing sturdily side by side with the fruit-épergne and the huge salt cellars. None of the dishes are ever put on the table; everything carvable is cut up in the kitchen and handed round by the footmen. The soup is served by the butler before he announces dinner, and menu-cards are seldom, or never, used in private houses. Port and sherry are practically unknown as a beverage. Tokay takes the place of madeira, and a delicious drink called *le petit bleu* is popular amongst the aristocracy who have been to Paris. It consists of champagne, 'Turk's-blood' (as the Buda bordeaux is called) and pounded ice. The two best-liked liqueurs, for use in the smoking-room after dinner and supper, are green chartreuse and champagne-cognac. Hungary is a wonderful place for appetites. In England I should be literally ashamed to eat as I did there, even supposing I felt inclined,

which is not the case. Dinner and supper are always succeeded by a small cup of very strong coffee, 'for the sake of the digestion,' and that is followed by a thimbleful of liqueur, 'to settle the coffee.' These customs found favour with me; but when they offered me a flask for my private consumption at odd moments I recoiled aghast. They apologised, and explained that English ladies of good birth were supposed (by them) always to keep a brandy-flask on the toilette-table in order to take 'a nip' whenever they needed it. I endeavoured to disabuse them of this notion, but not very successfully. They concluded that I was the exception that is popularly supposed to prove the rule.

If there is one thing to which a Hungarian of any class objects more than another it is pedestrianism. A daily ride or drive, a stroll round the garden and stables, a game at la grâce or croquet, is all the exercise anybody is in the habit of taking during the greater part of the year; so that most of my walks were solitary, which, candidly speaking, I prefer. It is so difficult to find a companion whose tastes and ideas are quite congenial either in England or Hungary! But the young Countess was easily roused into enthusiasm when I proposed day encampments in the forest. This girl, who is still one of my dearest friends, is one of the loveliest women I have ever seen. She comes of a race noted for their courage, culture and beauty. Her mother is one of five sisters, all beautiful, and her grandmothers were renowned for their beauty and charm to the last day of their lives. More than one of her direct ancestresses had fought beside husband or lover on the battlefield and the battlements, and the same blood still runs in her veins. She is a delightful

companion, and anything with a spice of hardihood in it appeals to her; so we decided to conduct our expeditions on strictly peasant principles, to forego luxury and adopt the homeliest fare. We could not discard shoes and stockings and swathe our feet in rags only, à la Wallach, because they never could be induced to keep on. It was an heroic effort to emulate them in this respect that produced the gash in the sole of my foot, from a bit of broken glass, which prevented all terpsichorean efforts for some weeks. That didn't pay, so we returned to ordinary foot-gear.

The Countess-mère was always very good to us; she invariably gave in to all our vagaries, so did the Count. They were a most amiable and kind-hearted couple! We declined the use of a carriage, but accepted a light little oblong waggon drawn by a tandem pair of donkeys. These wore scarcely a scrap of harness, and had never been driven with reins in their lives. A little ten-year-old Jew boy whom we had found weeping by the road-side one day, and adopted as a sort of out-door page from sheer pity for his homeless condition, was promoted to the office of postillion. Poor little Náczi! His mother had given him a ten-kreutzer bit, and told him to be off and fend for himself. Imagine being sent off to seek your fortune on a capital about equal to twopence! Riding was not his strong point. Whenever the donkeys galloped, which they invariably did down every steep, Náczi always rolled comfortably off, and we were therefore obliged to stop and wait for him at the bottom of every hill. Once they took it into their perverse and wicked heads to gallop all the way along a winding narrow bridle-road in the midst of the forest. Our postillion rolled off as usual,

but on we went—bump, jolt, swish! Shrieking with laughter, we laid ourselves backwards in the bottom of the cart to avoid being brushed off by the overhanging branches of the trees. The forester, deputed to accompany us everywhere as guide, came running breathlessly after the vehicle, shouting like a madman, and a wild boar*ess* surrounded by a bevy of terrified babies scuttled across the path, and crashed into the underwood with grunts of astonished dismay. In the distance sounded the wailing voice of Náczi crying piteously: 'Oh, please wait for me! Please wait for me!'

When our fiery steeds did at last see fit to stop we were all in such paroxysms of mirth, that it was impossible to sit up again, so the poor panting forester concluded we were killed, until he came within earshot. After this little episode the Count insisted on reins. We had a pair of rope ones rigged up, à la Wallach, and tried to drive them. If you have never gone through the same experience you cannot possibly fathom the difficulties that beset a 'coachee' of Transylvanian donkeys. One after the other we all 'handled the ribbons,' but with an equal lack of success. Going along the roads, particularly, they always behaved like perfect demons. The ditches, half full of stagnant water, were too great a temptation to be resisted. Both the animals were evidently imbued with the idea that to give us a plunge into this nasty green water would be a capital joke; but whilst our 'leader' essayed to chuck us into one ditch, our 'wheeler' tried to upset us into the other, and when the sudden starts, jumps, and rushes proved equally unsuccessful on either side, they would both lie down in the dust deliberately and

hee-haw! defiantly at us. A succulent thistle out of these same ditches was the only thing that would induce them to rise up and—try the same dodges on again. We used to start out with several bottles of drinking-water, stowed away amongst the hay upon which we sat, but we seldom had more than two left whole and intact for use. No earthly bottles could be expected to stand the swerves, bangs and bumps of our vehicle! Had we been sitting on anything harder than hay, human flesh and bones could never have stood it either. Our stock of provisions was restricted to the articles carried about by the peasants and herdsmen for their use, and under the auspices of the forester we were soon initiated into the mysteries of 'brigand's beefsteak,' eaten on slices of black bread with a pocket knife. He also taught us how to roast eggs, tomatoes, potatoes and green maize in the hot ashes; how to make onion soup (flavoured with plum-brandy) in an iron pot, with slices of stiff cold maize porridge in it. A kind of omelette (fried in the same iron pot) and some little hot maize-cakes baked on the glowing embers were both delicious to my palate, but the long narrow strips of fat bacon, cured in red pepper and eaten raw, I could never make up my mind to taste. There is very little wine drunk in that district of Transylvania, and absolutely no coffee or tea. The water is unwholesome, so men, women and children have but one common beverage, *palinkás*, a spirit distilled from plums and beetroot (to which rotten potatoes are said to be added). Fresh meat is very dear in comparison with other things (eggs are often five for twopence, and fowls sixpence to tenpence each—but *skinny*). The ordinary diet of the Wallachian consists of vege-

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table-soups, eggs, sheep's-milk cheese, melons, pickled cucumbers, black bread, fried potatoes, maize porridge, grey salt and raw onions, washed down by a small *porzion* of *palinkás*. If a man is rich enough to keep a buffalo or two, he and his family drink some of the warm milk for breakfast and supper, but cow's milk is considered only as a food for pigs and calves, or to mix with other milk for making cheese. You can't expect human beings to drink such poor stuff as that! they argue gravely. Even the household at 'the big house' would have 'jibbed' had they been required to drink cow's milk with their daily coffee. For my palate buffalo-milk was too rich in quality *and* flavour, but we used to have it boiled and sent to the table 'half and half.' Even then it tasted like cream. By the way, 'brigand's coffee' is a beverage not to be despised. You roast the berries in the wood-ashes of your fire, wrapped in a maize leaf, bruise them whilst hot between two stones, drop them into the iron pot of boiling water, and cover it up for five minutes over the fire; then you pour it off into an earthenware pitcher on to a large lump of wild bee's honey (there are scores of nests about in the forest) and stir it with a wooden spoon. It must be drunk either out of the jug, turn about, or in wooden bowls. We always drank our onion soup with the wooden spoons out of the same bowls, therefore we were never able to indulge ourselves to soup and coffee on the same day.

The relationship between master and servant is a very patriarchal one all over Hungary, but more particularly so in Transylvania. Sons and daughters succeed their fathers and mothers in service for generations. Fathers chastise their grown-up sons, mothers beat

their grown-up daughters; masters whip their men, and mistresses box the ears of their maids, without arousing the least resentment in their breasts. Quite the contrary, in fact; it is considered merely a sign of parental interest in them. Although there is no such thing as 'clan' in Hungary, yet no humble descendant of a Douglas or a McDermott could be more 'clannish' than are the dependents and servants on the estates of these great Hungarian noblemen. Our forester's people had been in the Count's service for generations, and no one was more jealous of the family dignity than he. One day we had decided to take quite a new route and explore the forest lying behind the blue hills on the near horizon. This would oblige us to traverse the valley and pass through a couple of small villages; he therefore begged us to let him borrow some more harness, so that we might be enabled to drive four-in-hand. We demurred; a pair was bad enough, what would four be like?

'But if we go like this with only a pair, everybody will take us for Jews going off somewhere to keep Christmas,' he pleaded.

This was a potent argument, and we laughingly consented.

It was arranged that we should start early and call at an outlying farm to select our additional 'cattle.'

There are no tenant-farmers anywhere in the country. The big landowners keep each farm for some special purpose. One is the dairy farm, another is the poultry farm, a third is the oxen farm, or the pig farm, or the sheep farm, &c. This one was the donkey farm, and on reaching it we found about seventy of these animals grazing on the moor. The bailiff came to advise our choice and help to catch the beasts when

chosen. They were not a bit shy, and came crowding round to exchange greetings with our donkeys in the most affable manner, but directly you attempted to seize any one of them the whole band decamped, kicking up their heels and 'giving tongue' in the most approved style. We were so amused by their behaviour that we got out of the cart and went to assist at the ceremony. After three-quarters of an hour of hard labour we succeeded in getting them harnessed as 'leaders' and tried to start off. But their companions had no intention of parting with them in that way. The team kicked, jibbed, and tried to run away, but the bailiff and the forester held on to their heads whilst Náczi used the whip, and off we went followed by the whole tribe. Donkeys black and brown, white and grey, young and old, ugly and pretty, thronged round us 'hee-hawing' in a way that was absolutely deafening. We put our fingers in our ears and laughed. This went on for ten minutes, then we reached a group of labourers at work. The bailiff called them and gave orders that they were to form in line and keep our escort back till we had got well away. Such a scene ensued! The men in their coarse linen divided skirts dashing about barefooted brandishing sticks, their long straight black hair floating in the morning breeze, their short shirts flapping loose from the waist, revealing glimpses of brown bodies, their broad straw hats tumbling off and getting mixed up with the donkeys' heels, and the two men at our leaders' heads trying to tug us and our team along.

'We must make them the wheelers and put the other two in front,' cried the forester. This was done. Now, you may succeed in backing a stubborn donkey, it appears, but not even the combined efforts of two

men and two other donkeys can make him go on, if he decides to lie down in the shafts. So, finally the poor forester had to put his pride in his pocket, turn the extra ones loose, and go on with only our ordinary pair, who, compared to the rest of their kind, seemed quite tractable and well behaved. We reached the distant forest in due time, and spent a delightful day under the trees, cooking, eating, reading, gathering wild fruit, decorating our hats with flowers, and lying full-length doing the *dolce far niente* at the edge of a *puszta*, listening to the tinkle or jangle of the bells as herds of cattle, sheep, pigs or buffaloes came straying across it, under the magnificent oaks and beeches, feeding on the acorns or the herbage that are so good and so plentiful out there. You may always know what animals are coming, before you see them, by the sound of the bells. The sheep-bell has a hollow tinkle, the buffalo-bell a harsh, loud jingle, the pig-bell a distinct clash, and the cattle-bell a melodious note of its own. The pig-herd carries a horn and he arouses the forest-echoes with it occasionally. The shepherd almost invariably takes his long wooden flute with him, on which he loves to play melancholy folk-songs, lying stretched at ease, wrapped in his furry cloak. He wears it with the skin outside, 'to keep off the heat,' in the day, and the wool outside at night, 'to keep off the cold.' To me it seemed a queer notion wrapping oneself in a sheepskin to keep cool; but there must be something in it, I suppose, since they all do it in every district alike. About six o'clock, we packed ourselves into our cart and started homeward. On the brow of the first hill our team took it into its head to have a good gallop, and down we started at a fine pace.

Suddenly something went: Crack! Off came the wheel, out flew everybody, and I found myself completely buried beneath a confused heap of hay, rugs, potatoes, bottles, wooden spoons, and odd ears of maize. The cart lay on its side, the forester and Náczi, who had both been sitting on the shafts, were lying close at hand, but the young Countess and her French governess had gone purling down the hill some distance. Nobody was hurt. The donkeys stood still, gazing stolidly at us, and we lay on the grass laughing. Across the valley on an opposite hill a large herd was browsing, but our shouts for assistance met with no response from the herdsmen. We sent Náczi over to ask them to help to tie the wheel and splice the shaft. They came immediately, full of apologies:

'When the honourable gentlefolks had first signalled, they had mistaken the party for Jews going off to keep Christmas,' they explained; 'if we had known that the honourable gentlefolks were good Magyars we should have run over to proffer our help without delay.'

'Jaj, jaj!' groaned the forester. 'Didn't I say so? To think that such a noble family should be mistaken for filthy Jews! De, Istenem! What a scandal, what a humiliation!'

When we got home and related our adventures to the Count, he sent for him and gave him a couple of florins to restore his equanimity, but I don't think he ever quite got over it. He used always to refer to it as one of the most painful incidents in his life.

CHAPTER VI

Gipsies—A peasant wedding—My success as a *csárdás* dancer—Marriage ceremonies—Divorce—Bathing anecdotes—Little Julscha—a Jew-doctor—Death wails—Lona—The full, true and particular history of Jemima Snooks.

PROBABLY most people know that Hungary numbers quite as many gipsies amongst her inhabitants as Spain does. There is a gipsy quarter in every town and every village. Legally they have just the same rights and just the same position as the Jews and the Magyars, the Wallachians, the Saxons, the Csángos, the Csabos, or any other of the various peoples who go to form the nation, but morally and socially they are a despised and persecuted race. In the villages particularly every peasant feels himself a lord in comparison with them. The youths and children hoot and mock at them in the streets; the priests neither baptize, marry, nor bury them. They come into the world and go out of it without Christian aid or Christian pity. They are constantly insulted, ill-used, and execrated. Yet no place, however tiny, can get on without them, for no festivity in Hungary is complete without the aid of a gipsy-band. Who could dance *csárdás* if there were no gipsies to play the solemn *lassu*, or the fiery *friss*, and what would any wedding or saint's day be without dancing? The Jews, though despised socially, are yet a privileged race. They are the commercial backbone of the country

and control the money-market everywhere. It is 'the Jew' who keeps the general shop, and often the inn as well, in nine places out of ten. Often he has also a secret still of his own and manufactures, unknown to the excise officers, the *palinkás* that he sells to his customers. He is, moreover, the money-lender of the district, and frequently manages to amass a comfortable competence, by these means, in the course of ten or fifteen years. Having accomplished this, he sells his business, moves into town, changes his name, and naturalises himself as a Magyar. Still, it takes several generations of Christianity before he can expect recognition in Society. The epithet of the 'used-to-be-a-Jew' clings for many, many years even to the wealthiest families. There are practically but two classes of Hungarians—nobility and peasantry. The middle-class, becoming more influential every day, is composed almost exclusively of Jews, Germans, or Greeks; but the Civil Marriage Bill that has just come into force will in the course of a few years amalgamate, to a large degree, these foreign elements into the bulk of the nation through intermarriage. I remember when this Bill nearly caused the downfall of a powerful and popular Premier. The crisis was only averted by the energy of the 'whips' and some expenditure of Government money in the way of railway fares. It was a very narrow majority that saved the Cabinet. How excited we all were about the issue of that 'count'! What political dinners used to take place under the hospitable roof of my host! I almost felt as though it had fallen to my share to help 'make history' when a well-known speaker asked my opinion on the measures to be introduced for the reform of the Upper House, and actually honoured me by using my

suggestion, with some modifications, as an amendment to the Bill, which passed both Houses without much difficulty. Hungarian politicians, by the way, have a great admiration for the British constitution and a vast respect for Lord Salisbury and his foreign policy. They look upon Paris as the metropolis of art and London as the metropolis of the world. A good deal of the English literature we are so proud of they consider dull and puritanical, but French literature finds immense favour with them. All the novels of Daudet, Maupassant, Zola, Jules Clarestie and the Countess Gyp appear in Budapest and Paris simultaneously, and are eagerly read at once by every man and woman with any pretensions to culture. The plays of Molière and Racine, too, are given frequently at the National Theatre, besides translations of all Scribe's comedies. There is no such thing as 'a run' at any theatre. The bill of fare changes each night, but any favourite piece or opera is given several times during a season. The Opera House and the National Theatre both belong to the Government, and are under the superintendence of a salaried 'director' appointed by the Cabinet in power.

But to return to Szt. Mihály. One day two young men appeared at the hall door requesting to see the family. They wore the whitest of linen apparel, the blackest of top-boots, and the shiniest of buttered hair. Roses were pinned to the fronts of their loose shirts and fastened in the bands of their round felt hats. They carried tall sticks ornamented with long streamers of ribbon—red, white and green—surmounted by bunches of flowers. The young fellow who held a paper scroll in his hand and could read, stepped forward, made a low bow, and began a long, flowery, rhetorical poem

inviting us to be present at his friend's wedding-feast 'to eat a morsel and drink a draught to the health and prosperity of the bride and bridegroom, whose respected parents were already looking forward to this honour in store for them.' The Count called for wine to refresh these 'inviters,' and replied suitably that we would do ourselves the pleasure of going. On the appointed day we donned our best bibs and tuckers, put on some jewels conspicuously, and set off in the carriage and four to drive up the hill to the cottage of the bride's people. All this parade struck me comically, yet everybody would have felt slighted had things been done with less ostentation. We drew up at the primitive little wooden gate with a flourish, and found the gipsy-band waiting to receive and escort us up to the house door, where he four parents were standing to welcome us. Behind them were the happy couple and the rest of the wedding party, who all came in turns to kiss our hands. Then we went in procession to the adjoining orchards, where dancing immediately began in a sort of open Dutch barn. The Count and Countess had to dance with the bride and bridegroom, whilst the 'bride's cavalier' and the 'best man' fell to the lot of the young Countess and myself. No one else took any part in this *csárdás* of honour. The rest formed a circle and looked on. My partner was a wiry young fellow about twenty-five; a Wallachian whose knowledge of the Magyar tongue was about as imperfect as my own. It was the first time I had ever attempted to dance the *csárdás*, though I had seen it performed on the stage and in the villages scores of times before. However, we started off in great style, and the adagio movement proved easy enough. The music grew quicker and quicker, the

dancers whirled and twirled and pirouetted. So did I. My feet kept time and I filled in the interstices with all the ballet steps imaginable. The others left off one after the other, but still my partner went on under the impression that I wanted 'to dance him down.' The gipsies played as though they were possessed. I grew breathless, the perspiration rolled down my partner's brown cheeks and fell off on to his white shirt in big drops. 'Nagy faradt! nagy faradt!' I gasped, meaning to say I am very tired—though not saying exactly what I meant. He, poor man! took this as a great compliment and only danced on the harder. I dared not stop, because the Countess had warned me beforehand that I must get through the dances somehow or it would create offence. Each time we passed near them I shrieked: 'Do stop him! I shall be dead!' but they were enjoying the scene, and the more eccentric my steps became the louder grew the buzz of admiration. The peasants thought it must be the latest fashion. At last the Count insinuated that it was enough, some one signed to the gipsies to stop, and I dropped into a chair exhausted. Instantly the girls crowded round to kiss my hand, stroke my dress, examine my shoes and compliment me on having given such a brilliant exhibition of my dancing powers, whilst the men thronged about my partner for the same purpose, slapping him on the shoulders, and bringing him wine. We were the heroes of the moment. It was most amusing, and during the remainder of my stay at Szt. Mihály they never ceased to teaze me about my *succès fou* at Mariska's wedding.

A short pause and some folk-songs ensued, then we were marshalled into the house to eat a piece of rich

maize-cake and drink the young couple's health out of a monster loving-cup, after which we returned to the barn and danced a sort of waltz. If it had been another *csárdás* I should never have survived it. Directly our carriage was announced the company formed themselves into a *cortège*, and kissed our hands as we passed along in procession escorted by the parents and headed by the band playing the Rakóczi March. As we drove along past the barn the noise of stamping, whirling and finger-snapping denoted that they had got well into another *friss* and were thoroughly enjoying themselves.

Before leaving we had each placed some money in the plate provided for that purpose. Nobody gives wedding presents in that rank of life, but every guest contributes something to 'the plate,' and this makes a nice little nest-egg for the youthful couple to begin upon. They are, as a rule, very youthful. The girls are generally not more than fifteen or sixteen, and the men nineteen to twenty-three. With the exception of the Spaniards, there is no nation in Europe who dance like the Hungarians. They love it with a love that amounts to a passion. They not only go in for it heart and soul, but they will dance on anything in any sort of weather—a paddock, a village-street, a stable-yard, the earthen floor of a wayside *csárdá*, it is all the same to them. Not the scorching sun, or the whirling dust, or the pelting rain, or the falling snow will deter them. They all dance beautifully too; it seems to be in their blood, just as thieving and fiddling is in the gipsy veins. There is, by the way, a tradition that when a gipsy babe comes into the world it is laid on the ground with a purse on one side and a fiddle on the other. If it stretches out a tiny fist towards the former, thieving

becomes its profession in life; but should it turn towards the latter they bring it up as a musician. Not that it ever learns music in our acceptation of the term. They play 'by ear,' and the leader of a band seems always to be endowed with some svengali-like attribute that enables him to sway his subordinates in an almost magical fashion. Sing an air once through to him and he can play it. The others will listen attentively, and then each man will join in and take up his separate part in a truly marvellous way.

Of course all this dancing in Hungary means copious draughts of amber wine or *palinkds-vizet* (literally water with a modicum of brandy in it), but they only seem to dance and sing the better for these potations. When it is all over, man and wife, father and daughter, mother and son, brother and sister, go rolling merrily home together, for there is a great deal of comradeship between the sexes. There is, however, wonderfully little habitual drunkenness and even less rowdiness. People seem to grow noisy and 'happy' under the influence of drink there, rather than quarrelsome—except at election times. This wedding feast to which we went only lasted three days, though Mariska's father was one of the head men of the place; sometimes they go on for a whole week, but that is usually when they take place in winter. There is little or no work in hand then. There are many quaint marriage customs, but they vary considerably in different parts; almost each locality has its own local customs, but all of them, I believe, have the bride race and the capping ceremony. 'To put on the cap' is an expression equivalent to saying 'she has got married.'

At a certain stage of the proceedings the bride starts

off to run to the nearest inn with her husband, and the best man after her. If the former catches her before she reaches the threshold, the latter has to pay for all the wine drunk at the wedding that day; if the best man succeeds in doing so, it is the husband who must pay the piper. This race always causes intense excitement throughout the whole village. Everybody turns out to watch and laugh and clap the winner. When the husband fails to catch his wife he always comes in for plenty of 'chaff' from the bystanders. At midnight the mother and the assembled matrons lead the bride to an inner room, take off her wreath and crown, fasten up her long plaits of hair, and put upon her the black silk head-dress worn by the married women on state occasions. Then she is brought back to the company and ceremoniously delivered over to her husband and—her mother-in-law. Most of the sons continue to live in their fathers' houses after marriage, and young wives don't always have a very good time of it. Still, they have their consolations. Matches are generally arranged for the young people by their parents on a purely business basis. Sometimes each of the contracting parties is in love with some one else (possibly the best man and one of the bridesmaids). This, however, is quite a minor matter. Marriage is marriage, and love is love, in the eyes of a peasant. During working hours husband and wife must stand shoulder to shoulder as good comrades and true; but twilight and moonlight were made for lovers. Of course love-matches do occasionally take place, and there are also cases where indifference develops into strong affection after marriage, but they are the exception rather than the rule. Sometimes a man beats his wife, or a woman makes constant

scenes of jealousy. In the first case the woman runs home, in the second her husband sends her back to her own people; they do not appeal for a divorce or even a judicial separation, they merely go each his own way and 'console' themselves.

There is literally no standard of morality amongst them. To have 'lovers,' or not to have them, is merely a question of individual taste and personal charm, either before or after marriage. To be a prude is to be something unnatural and repellent. Amongst the upper classes, on the contrary, girls are strictly guarded until their wedding day. Not even the most innocent flirtation is permitted, and to allow a girl to be for one single minute alone with a man would be considered the height of impropriety. After the wedding day, *on a changé tout ça*. From thenceforward she has only her husband to reckon with. Public opinion does not exist. People will smile and whisper, but no one will tell tales. On the contrary. The world is always on her side, so long as she uses a certain amount of discretion in her actions. Everybody combines to help in deceiving *un mari trompé*, and a man has just the same privileges where his wife is concerned. In spite of this, husbands and wives usually esteem each other very highly. There is often a certain amount of real affection between them. They are very careful of each other's dignity, and they consult each other's wishes on every point of mutual interest. Marriage was instituted by the Church and brings with it a certain social status, therefore it behoves them to keep their compact honourably, they argue. But beyond that human nature cannot be expected to go. 'Tis love that makes the world go round, and love cannot be

ruled by forms and ceremonies. Divorce is easily obtainable on several 'counts,' but it is not very frequent, because the Church does not recognise it, and will not re-marry a divorced person of either sex. The very funniest thing I ever heard of in that way is the case of a great actor and actress who are important members of the company at the National Theatre in Budapest. They have been divorced and re-married to each other three times already in three separate religions. The last time they went up for the ceremony the Calvinist minister remarked: 'My dear children, is it worth while to go through with it, d'you think?'

If a divorced person wants to marry again, the plan is to abjure Roman Catholicism and become either a Calvinist or a Lutheran. They are not too strict to tie the matrimonial knot again. After a decent interval there is nothing to prevent you being re-converted to the Church, of course, should you desire it. Priests, by the way, are not permitted to marry; but 'housekeepers' of the youngest and prettiest description are allowed. Also 'nephews' and 'nieces.' This struck me as being a neat way of getting round an awkward corner. Euphemism cannot be said to have died out entirely yet. Somehow the term 'celibate clergy' always sticks in my throat. I object to the rankly hypocritical. The 'Popas' in the Greek Church are all married men; but why they should so often choose plain wives, years older than themselves, is still a mystery to me. Perhaps they had not much choice in the matter. Who knows?

During the hot months we used to bathe every midday. At first we splashed about in a small lake not far from the house, but as the heat increased this grew

stagnant and malarial; therefore the Count, at our request, had a fifteen-foot bath dug out for us, and turned a little stream into it. It took two days to fill, but after that the spring kept it constantly brimming. We had a wooden dressing-hut on one side of it and some wooden steps leading down to it. The water came just up to my lips when I stood upright, and it was icy cold. We much preferred its crystal clearness to the lake, but we didn't have nearly so many adventures in it. When frogs got in I used to have the pleasure of going in first and catching them in my hands, poor mites! Nobody else would touch them, though they are such pretty chirpy green and yellow morsels and acted as our swimming models; for we taught ourselves to swim in rather a primitive fashion. Having fastened a rope across the surface of the water at one end of the lake, we used to throw ourselves flat upon it, and waggle our arms and legs about just as we saw the funny little frogs doing. Needless to say that our earlier efforts in this direction were the cause of much mirth. We sometimes waggled our legs a trifle too high, and found ourselves taking unintentional 'headers.' Once the rope suddenly gave way and sent us all three, plop! to the bottom. On scorching days we always bathed under the shadow of big white umbrellas because the glare at that hour was terrific. It was on such a day as this that I lay calmly floating on my back with my head against the rope and an open umbrella in my hand, when, to my horror, I suddenly perceived a wicked-eyed black water-rat making straight for my toes. Forgetting my position, I reared up and lashed out at him with the only weapon in my hand. The next instant I and the rat were both under the water, and when I reached the surface again,

covered with black oozy mud, the others were clinging on to the rope, helpless with laughter at my expense.

One Sunday we induced a peasant woman to come and bathe in the lake. She had been watching us for some time and seemed to think it fine fun, so she at once accepted our invitation to join in the sport, slipped off her chemise and frock (the only garments she wore except top-boots and a black kerchief on her head) with alacrity and stepped boldly in. But baths of any kind were unknown luxuries to her, and directly the cold water touched her body she began to utter piercing shrieks.

'Jesus Maria! save me, save me! My God in Heaven, come to my assistance! Jaj, jaj! Jesus Maria!'

In vain we advised her to retreat, she took no notice of our words. There she stood stock still shivering, and shrieking to every saint in the calendar for help. At last we led her out like a frightened child, and the maid gave her a towel to dry herself with. Whilst she scrubbed herself vigorously up and down she continued to shudder and to ejaculate at intervals:

'Oh! that water, that cursed water! Who would have thought that water could sting like that? Jesus Maria! Istenem!'

During the process of digging out the bath we used to pay periodical visits of inspection. The Count had employed some of the gipsy population to do it—they work cheaper even than the Wallachs, and are glad of some means to earn a few florins, poor souls! One of them was the most perfect model of a Greek Antinous that I have ever seen; his wife, on the contrary, was like an ugly little Esquimaux, and they had a poor



GERGELY

wailing infant, whom the mother used to carry about on her head in a sort of small wooden pig-trough, when she came to bring her husband a hunch of maize-cake for his dinner, or to beg an armful of clean straw to spread on their plank bed. Amongst them, too, was a gigantic fellow, named Gergely. One morning he appeared upon the scene with a little round-limbed bronze Cupid sitting on his arm, which turned out to be only a human baby after all. She was his only child, almost two years old, and her name was Julscha. She was not even provided with the proverbial hat of the Spanish gipsy in its youth, but clothed in all the beauty of her baby innocence; she sat contentedly for hours on her father's sheepskin, playing with pebbles and acorns, or trotted about hand in hand with me watching the lazy lizards basking in the sun, or the agile frogs darting about in the clear streamlet. She couldn't understand a word of Hungarian nor I a syllable of Romany, nevertheless a great friendship sprang up between us. She liked cups of milk and slices of *kolaczi*, and she would clap her tiny brown hands with delight when she saw me arriving with a leaf full of ripe red currants for her. From Gergely we easily found out that he and his pretty, passionate wife had quarrelled, so Zoè had taken her departure and there was nobody at home to look after the 'jewel of his heart.' Zoè had gone away once before—she was hot-tempered—but she had come back again a few days later; she would do the same this time doubtless, and then they would 'make it up.' He was very fond of Zoè; she was such a beauty too; but she aggravated him sometimes and then he couldn't help beating her. As for the wee, laughing Julscha, they both adored her; she had such 'heavenly' eyes, so

black and roguish. About a week later Zoè came back and the bath was finished, so I did not see as much of them for the future. I bought a piece of cheap red twill at 'the Jew's' and made a sort of liberty frock from it for Julscha's birthday and sent it to her by Náczi with some fruit and a loaf of *kolaczi*. A couple of hours later Gergely, Zoè and the baby herself, habited in the new garment—the first she had ever worn—came down to pay me a ceremonious visit of thanks. It was quite touching to see how proud and grateful they were. 'We are only dogs of gipsies after all!' was the refrain of almost every sentence. What generations of oppression must be needed to bring a proud, fearless race down to this state of servility! After that, Gergely was constantly bringing me gifts—a white owl, a rare flower, an eagle's feather begged from one of the keepers, and I verily believe he would have given his life for me if necessary. I had treated them as human beings and they could never forget it. Poor Gergely! One autumn day the footman came into the smoking room to announce that he was sobbing on the terrace and begging for God's sake to see me at once. I went out and found him sitting on the steps in a heartbroken condition. He seized the hem of my dress, kissing it fervently and apologising humbly for his audacity in craving an interview. Nothing but the imminent danger of his child's life could excuse so great a liberty; but since I had condescended in the greatness of my heart to love a mere gipsy brat, he had been emboldened to come and ask a favour. Julscha was ill—dying. Would I not be so good as to beg the Count to send a carriage and fetch a doctor to see her? No doctor would come at the request of a gipsy dog like himself.

The Count, who was kindness itself, sent off for the nearest doctor without delay. I went with Gergely to the gipsy quarter, and climbed up the steep slope to his hut amidst a throng of dirty, Murillo-like children, picturesque in their rags and nudity. The huts, built irregularly all over the hill, were mere mud hovels consisting of one room, guiltless alike of chimney or window, unless a square hole covered with a rough wooden shutter might be so designated. The door of Gergely's abode was wide open; men and women were crowding round, all chattering at once. As we drew near he said a few words in Zincali to them, and his neighbours instantly moved away leaving the entrance clear, and only gazing silently at me as I passed in. On a sloping board in one corner lay the wee sufferer wrapped in her father's coat, which was evidently in the habit of doing duty as bed-clothes for all of them. This apology for a bed was the only bit of furniture in the hut. A couple of stones at the other end served their turn as stove or seat according to requirement, and an iron pot stood near it, also a wooden bowl and a brown earthenware water-pitcher. That was all. Not a vestige of table, chair, or stool; no crockery, no spoons, no *nothing* besides. On the mud floor near her child sat the poor mother, rocking herself to and fro, moaning and muttering in her own tongue—whether prayers, curses, or incantations I cannot say. Indeed I was never able to discover whether the genuine gipsy *has* any idea of God or devil. They will never talk about their own religious beliefs. They are undoubtedly fatalists, but—so are the Calvinists. Little Julscha seemed quite unconscious, and looked as though she were dead even then. I took her tiny round wrist

between my fingers, but the pulse was scarcely perceptible. How helpless one feels in an emergency of this kind! There was nothing to be done apparently but wait for medical aid. Questions elicited from the distracted parents the facts that she had been ailing for a week, but 'the wise woman,' a horrible-looking old hag, had given her herb tea to cure her and they had taken her out to the fields with them as usual. Sometimes she had been fretful and sleepy, sometimes she had cried and talked wildly (evidently in delirium), but since last night she had not moved or opened her eyes, and everybody said she was dying. Presently the doctor, a fat, pompous, vulgar man with creaky boots and a loud voice, arrived, puffing considerably after his pull up the hill. He sniffed audibly at his patient's surroundings and spat viciously on the floor several times as a sort of protest against entering such an abode, then he bent over the inanimate bundle, shrugged his shoulders and turned to me, saying in French:

'Mademoiselle, j'ai l'honneur de vous constater que la petite est déjà mourante. Je ne puis rien pour elle. À quoi bon rester ici alors, dans cet étable à cochons? N'est-ce pas, mademoiselle, que vous allez avoir la grande bonté d'expliquer à M. le comte qu'il n'y avait rien à faire quoique je suis venu aussi vite que possible? La petite doit avoir été bien malade il y a quelques jours déjà. Si on m'avait appelé de bonne heure peut-être que je la pouvais avoir sauvée; maintenant c'est trop tard! Mais ils sont bêtes comme des oies, ces chiens de bohémiens.' I listened gravely, promised to explain, and asked if the child was likely to last much longer.

'Mais non, non; pas du tout. Une demi-heure au

plus. Mademoiselle permettrait que je dise qu'elle ne doit pas rester pour le moment de la mort. Dans les derniers moments il y avait toujours un tel fracas et les bohémiens sont si méchants. On peut vous voler, maltraiter! Qui sait?' I smiled and thanked him for his advice. I was not afraid, but I should not stay long, my presence would be only an intrusion there at such a time.

'Alors j'ai l'honneur de vous saluer, mademoiselle!' said the doctor with a bow and a flourish. Then he went puffing and blowing and stumbling down the hill, swearing in gruff tones at the children who ventured to get in his way. He had been born a peasant, he was proud of his French, and he considered that his professional dignity had been outraged by this request to attend upon a sick gipsy brat. I watched his rotund form and red face disappear with almost a sense of relief; but then, what was the death of this child to him, or to anyone except her own parents? In a few words, and as gently as possible, I told the anxious parents that there was no hope. The despair depicted on Gergely's face was intense. The mother recommenced her moanings and mutterings, heedless of my attempts to comfort her. There was no good in remaining. I stooped over the little creature and kissed her cold, ghastly cheeks, making furtively a sign of the cross over her tiny body. It was all I could do. Before reaching the road below the death-wail of the mother reached my ear; it was answered in an instant by her neighbours with weird effect. These lugubrious sounds made me shiver involuntarily. I wondered where in the realms of space that little gipsy soul was wandering. A baby-soul! How tiny and

white it must be, even though its body had been brown as a hazel-nut. The next day they buried her in their own way with their own ceremonies, and that was the end of my little human Cupid, who had been transformed every Sunday and holiday into a scarlet field-poppy as proud as a miniature peacock.

During late August we went to spend a few days under the hospitable roof of a countess, who, like the wife of Lord Burleigh, was 'a peasant born.' Her history is worth recording, since there is an Englishwoman mixed up in it. Let us begin as the fairy tales do. Long, long ago in the first decade of this century, an only child was born to a wealthy couple of Hungarian nobles. It was a son, and they simply adored him. Years passed, and he grew into a moody, studious youth, who was a misogynist and refused to look at a woman. To cure him of this disease, they sent him to spend a year in Paris. Walking one day in the Bois, he met a girls' school. A tall, fair-haired pupil cast upon him the sunshine of her blue eyes. The glance struck to his heart. Day by day they met and looked at each other; then she fainted. He flew to the rescue, carried her to a seat, and eloped with her three weeks later. She was an Englishwoman, named Jemima Snooks, and she made the young Count marry her. His people were furious, but they eventually forgave him and told him to take his young wife home to them. He did so, and she quarrelled with her mother-in-law more or less all her life. Having several estates, they gave them Lona to live at and parted company. Jemima, however, soon tired of a country life and her quiet, studious husband, and began a series of flirtations with the garrison-officers at Kolozsvár. Jealous scenes were the result.

The Count fell ill; the Countess selected the prettiest peasant girl in the village as his nurse. Years passed; two lovely little girls trotted about 'the castle,' and sat on the Count's knee. Jemima ignored them. She hated children, and thanked Heaven that she had none of her own. The '48 Revolution burst over the land. Jemima took this opportunity for running off with an officer. There was a divorce, and the Count married his peasant girl. He educated her, and three more children were added to the little daughters already mentioned. They were very happy and the years passed swiftly by. The old people both died, the 'young Count' became an elderly man, and his health, always delicate, declined. His elder daughters grew up into beautiful, elegant, cultured girls, but nobody asked them in marriage, they could not be presented at court, nor introduced to society. Their father took this to heart; it preyed upon his mind so much, in fact, that one day in a fit of despair he put an end to his life. On hearing of this tragedy, the Emperor-King, who owed much to the loyalty of this particular family, did what he would willingly have done earlier had he been asked to do so, he legitimatised the two daughters and created them countesses in their own right. They are both happily married now, and have been known in society for years as 'the beautiful countesses.' Their mother still lives, beloved and respected, in spite of her birth and—the rest. Jemima still lives too, dependent on the bounty of her *ci-devant* servant. Her second husband died and, as a third venture, she married his farm-bailiff. They both gambled away every penny they possessed; now they live in a tiny cottage supported by charity. On Fair-days

they go to Kolozsvár 'on the spree' together, and on these occasions they are generally found lying dead-drunk in some ditch or other, and taken home in a cart by some casual passer-by, knowing as the whole neighbourhood does, that everybody who does a kindness to Jemima is sure of a reward from the peasant Countess, who cannot cease to remember that Jemima was at least good to her in days gone by.

Lona is a tiny village, planted in the midst of meadows and vineyards, with several big ponds, and the river Szamos running through it. Numbers of geese are reared there, and the goose-girls with their feathered flocks are eminently 'paintable.' The second daughter, a pupil of Munkácsy at his magnificent Parisian studios, has a very decided talent for painting, and her picture of a goose-herd taken in their own village met with a great deal of favourable criticism when exhibited at the Paris Salon. She had a studio at Lona which was shared by her two sisters—the eldest being a china-painter and an accomplished pianist; the younger one a clever modeller. The studio was in a modern building, separate from the house, where her brother and his tutors also had a suite of apartments to themselves, though everybody went into the castle for meals, which were served in the big dining-hall. Such a company as we were at meal-times! Besides the family themselves, four of us, and two other guests, there were the two tutors, a French governess, a German Fräulein, an estate-agent and a dear old thing who went by the name of 'Klara-néné.' She had been the humble companion of a young Countess belonging to the family, had shared with her all sorts of perils, and borne with her the brunt of four years' imprison-

ment in an Austrian fortress, on a false charge of 'treason and sedition,' at the time of the Revolution. Her poor young mistress only came out of prison to die of consumption, but 'Klara-néné' had lived on amongst them, loved and taken care of as a valued friend by all of them. The long table in the room was always a charming sight. The third daughter took upon herself to arrange the flowers for it. She did so with consummate taste, and the decorations were changed for every meal. She was neither so tall nor so beautiful as her elder sisters, but quite as charming. I fell in love with all of them, including the mother. She always wore black, and could never be persuaded to don a single jewel except her wedding-ring: 'I have no desire to shine as "the Countess," I wish merely to be the mother of my children,' she used often to say. She was a splendid woman of business and managed the whole of the property during her son's long minority; he was the youngest, and did not come of age till his twenty-fourth year.

We had a very lively time there, walking, riding, driving, climbing to the tops of the turrets and going up the gloriette for the sake of the view. After supper we acted charades attired in all sorts of costumes, borrowed from the peasantry for this purpose, and ended up with a *csárdas* in the dining-hall. After we had all gone to bed, the young Count brought his violin and a party of other instrumentalists to serenade us under our windows. This little attention was meant specially for the young Countess, I fancy.

CHAPTER VII

Bear-hunting in the Karpathians—My host and hostess—A shooting-box—Bears, black and brown—Wolf-yarns—A forest *goûter* and a buffalo-bull—A peasant woman and natural poetry—Melons for the pig—Instinctive courtesy—A peasant cottage—A *Kaloka*—Hailstorms—Evening rides—A rich peasant farmer.

AT the beginning of September an opportunity occurred for me to accompany the Countess on a fortnight's visit to a hunting lodge high up in the Karpathians. There was to be a shooting party, and bears were to be the sport. Of course the idea delighted me, although, candidly speaking, I am not fond of firearms. I *could* let off a pistol if occasion demanded, but my want of enthusiasm for this branch of 'sport' let me in for a great deal of raillery in a country where women are in the habit of constantly hunting and shooting with their husbands, fathers, and brothers. At Szt. Mihály, indeed, the head groom, who was a Pole, and had spent many years in the army, rigged up a 'flying-target' for us to practise at during the summer with small, light guns, specially designed for the use of our sex. This hunting-lodge was miles and miles from any village or hamlet. We left Kolozsvár in the early morning, and drove for hours through a sun-bathed, tree-clothed landscape of hill and dale to a small house belonging to the same people, where a meal had been

prepared for us by the keeper's wife, who acted as caretaker; then about two o'clock we mounted on to small, sturdy little mountain-bred horses, sure-footed as mules, and rode off seven hours' distance up amongst the dwarf oaks and dark pines. Presently these gave way to stunted firs and juniper-bushes backed by snowy peaks, and a wooden cottage with latticed shutters over the windows came into view. Near it stood a smaller wooden building for kitchen purposes and servants' quarters. The door opened into a good-sized 'house-place,' used indiscriminately as hall, dining-room, smoking-room, and drawing-room. The windows were hung with linen curtains embroidered à la Wallach with red and blue thread in elaborate patterns of conventional Greek designs by our hostess herself; a long table, some wicker chairs, a couple of oak benches and stools, a big iron stove and plenty of bearskins thrown on the floor, completed the furniture. Round the walls hung guns and a few of the quaint, bright-coloured *tulipános* plates and goblets. Besides this apartment, there was a big dormitory for the men, and a few small, single rooms for us, all of them very simply furnished. Our host and hostess were people well known throughout Europe—he as a great diplomatist, she as a great beauty. I was charmed with them, and their 'box,' and everything. The air was clear, cold, and exhilarating. A mantle of cold grey and dark green seemed to wrap you round on every side, and the sky felt close to your head, almost within reach of your outstretched hand at first, but by degrees this feeling of awesome nearness to Infinity wore off. I rather hoped that we should have the grisly pleasure of sniffing, growling bears prowling round the place

during the night, and lay awake waiting for them with delighted shivers running down my back, but they never came. If you want to find bears you must seek them, even in the Karpathians. However, I did have the good fortune to see one big black fellow killed during my stay. The 'bag' for the whole time was five, but none of the others fell to the lot of my companion, though we caught glimpses of a good many at various times, black and brown. They are extremely clever at slinking off mysteriously into safe hiding-places, and never care to show fight unless actually brought to bay, except in winter, when cold and starvation combine to render them dreadfully savage; still, my heart 'came into my mouth' with fright when I saw our Mr. Bruin come out of a thicket and 'go for us,' apparently, at a fast trot. As a matter of fact, he could not see us; if he had done so, he would certainly have turned tail and dashed into the nearest available lair; but the big, shaggy fellow looked so formidable that I trembled in every limb until he lay dead upon the ground. Then, when he was really done for, I felt mean, and wished we hadn't killed him in such a sneakish fashion. (*We*, remember—my portion of this deed of prowess being to carry the second rifle and part of the ammunition.) It seemed cruel not to give him a chance to fight for his life. We always saw lots of 'shootable' things up there, but nobody shot them, for fear of frightening the bears away. It astonishes me now when I think of the miles and miles we must have walked every day in our peregrinations, without undue fatigue. This I attribute to short gowns and knickers. Sometimes at night we heard the distant howl of wolves, but they did not show themselves by day. During the

frozen months of winter they are not so particular. They will even venture into the villages and devour cattle, children, or sometimes grown-up people. There are lots of horrible stories extant of their fierceness and impudence. It is, I believe, actually true that no winter passes without several lives being sacrificed to them, but to hear the keepers and foresters talk you would imagine that they were in the habit of devouring whole villages every month. Occasionally a wolf goes mad; then he rushes about the country foaming at the mouth and biting all the dogs till he dies in convulsions, or is shot by some one more courageous than his fellows. When this occurs, it is sometimes followed by a regular epidemic of rabies and hydrophobia. The men used to be called in after dinner to entertain us with wolf and bear yarns whilst we sat round the ugly black stove, smoking cigarettes and drinking black coffee. Being up there, so 'far from the madding crowd,' was a wonderful experience to me. It was all so different to Switzerland and other show places of the world. Nature pure and unadulterated reigned supreme. The world seemed so far, far away; the Deity so near! But it sometimes struck me as wanton cruelty on our part to go up there and lie in ambush for poor Bruin amongst his own peculiar haunts. Still, nothing would have induced me to stay away.

Not long after our return to Szt. Mihály we really did have a narrow escape from an infuriated animal; not a wolf or a bear, but a buffalo-bull. One afternoon at the end of September, the young Countess, Mademoiselle T—— and myself drove out to have *goûter* under the sylvan shade of the forest, about three miles from the house. We told the coachman to put us down at

the head of the loveliest *puszta* I ever saw, and to come back and fetch us at six o'clock.

Imagine a stretch of the softest, finest, thickest pasture dotted over with venerable oak-trees, shut in on three sides by hills. Beeches, larches, and saplings, ruddy and golden, clothe their sloping sides. Where the forest ended the valley widened. Cornfields and patches of maize stood yellow and brown against the sky, and faded away in a misty purple 'distance' of forest and mountain on the horizon. On the way we had bought some peaches and plums from a market-cart. These lay on some leaves now beside the bottles of cold coffee and milk, the *kolaczi* and cakes. In spite of the bright sun the air was a trifle cool, and Mademoiselle T—— had donned one of those *cachemires* so dear to the heart of a Parisienne. It was as republican in colour as the famous red petticoat of Louise Michel, but that made no difference to us—for some time. The young Countess took out a piece of dainty embroidery and seated herself near her companion, who was reading aloud 'Le Roman d'un Jeune Homme Pauvre.' Being already on terms of intimacy with Raymond, and all the rest of Octave Feuillet's heroes and heroines, I removed myself out of ear-shot and threw myself down lazily on the grass to 'imbibe' whatever earth, air, or sky chose to offer me. I am nothing if not an impressionist!

A light breeze rustled the foliage over my head, and a verse of Byron echoed dreamily through my brain :

'There's music in the sighing of a reed,
There's music in the gushing of a rill,
There's music in all things if men had ears:
Their earth is but an echo of the spheres.'

The impression made upon my plastic mind that afternoon by a herd of buffaloes is indelible. The bells sounded quite melodious in the distance. I thought of Cowper's words:

> 'There is in souls a sympathy with sounds,
> And as the mind is pitched, the ear is pleased.'

Nearer and nearer they wound their way slowly across the broad *puszta*, their shaggy blackness and brownness shown up against the blue and green of their surroundings.

Have you ever felt too lazy even to think—too lazy to do anything but lie still and let mind and eyes wander where they will? That was how I felt when I suddenly became conscious that the leader of the herd, a big, handsome bull, was coming for us with a vengeance.

In an instant I was on my feet, crying:

'Run! Run! Up the hill! There's a buffalo coming!' With difficulty I dragged the red shawl off Mademoiselle's shoulders, and threw it on the ground. Away we all dashed, but she was fat and couldn't get on. 'Climb a tree!' I panted.

'Je ne puis pas! Ah, mon Dieu! Il vient! Je le vois déjà. Que faire? Que faire? Je suis perdue!' she shrieked.

I rushed back and seized her hand, shouting:

'Come on! We must run up and down among the trees. He can't turn easily with those horns.'

How he bellowed and raged behind us. The men shouted, the dogs barked, there was a regular stampede of the whole herd, and when the earthquake had subsided, a voice could be distinguished calling for the

gracious ladies to come back, since the danger was over.

With our hearts palpitating violently we went slowly down the hill, and discovered a *Gulyas* gravely picking up the fragments of the republican garment and carefully shaking them out one by one.

'Mon Dieu! Ma belle cachemire!' cried Mademoiselle, bursting into tears.

'Would you have preferred to be torn in pieces yourself?' I asked mildly.

We stood and surveyed a scene of ruin. The buffaloes had just rushed straight over our *goûter*. Coffee and milk bedewed the grass, peaches and cakes were squashed to a dirty pulp, books and scissors, cups and spoons were decidedly 'mixed,' and desolation reigned around. Though still afflicted with qualms that this highly conservative animal might again return to wreak further vengeance on what he had doubtless mistaken for a trophy of red-hot radicalism, I collapsed as usual into paroxysms of mirth. It had been like a transformation scene in a London pantomime. One moment a picture of idyllic peace and sylvan beauty; the next, a pandemonium of wild confusion, raging animals, barking dogs, shouting men and shrieking girls.

The ludicrous side of things always does strike me, especially in church. A reprehensible state of things no doubt, but one for which I can scarcely be held responsible since I was not consulted at the time of my creation. Had any choice in the matter been permitted to me, I should have created myself quite differently, of course. Talking of this reminds me of a conversation I had with an old peasant woman one day.

'The gracious lady is like a swallow skimming over the ground,' she remarked. 'Everybody is created by the dear Lord God Almighty to resemble a bird, an animal, and an insect. It was of a swallow, a chamois, and a grasshopper, I thought, as my eyes fell on the gracious lady just now.'

I laughed softly: 'And you, little Mother, what are you like, pray?' I asked.

'Like a chattering jackdaw, a hunchy buffalo-cow, and a night-moth, now,' came the ready repartee; 'but there was a time when people called me a *sticglitz*, a saucy brown she-goat, and a gleaming fire-fly. Jaj, jaj! Those days are long past! I had not married my husband then, nor buried my sons, nor dandled my grandchildren on my knees. Life was all before me then, as it is before the gracious lady to-day; now, it is all behind me. Far, far behind me. I am only the grey-haired old grannie now. But the dear Lord God Almighty is good, and there is no old age in heaven,' she ended with a sigh.

'Though knees be weak and eyes be blind,
Though we may seek and never find,
Here doth His hidden glory shine,
Unknown, Ineffable, Divine!'

whispered my heart softly to me in the words of Lewis Morris as I listened to the harsh, quavering tones of this wrinkled, toilworn old woman and moderated my gait to her heavy, slow steps. Soon she had told me all her family history. The troubles, joys, hopes, fears, faiths, and torments of her life were laid bare before my eyes by the picturesque language and direct simplicity of the Magyar. They are all like that, in every

class. There is no shyness, no reserve, no fictitious modesty about them. They speak straight 'from the heart' to friend and foe alike, claiming and obtaining from each other sympathy, full, free and genuine for every joy, as well as for every sorrow.

What did it matter that I was almost like a princess in her estimation, since I dwelt at 'the big house'! The greatest lady in the land is, after all, only a woman with the same feelings, the same vices, the same virtues, as the rest of her sex; she would have argued, if you had accused her of garrulousness towards a foreigner.

When, by-and-by, I said good-bye to her, we felt like old acquaintances, and in response to my

'Isten veled, Kedvesem!' (God be with thee, my dear soul!), she raised my hand to her lips with the customary salutation, added affectionately 'God guard the gracious lady on her way, and grant her the desire of her heart,' and begged me to go and see her. She explained graphically that her abode was near the church, 'the house with the big pig-sty against it, where I live with my old master and my last-left daughter, whose husband came to take the place of our own dead sons.' One evening, a few days later, I started off in search of Erzsi's cottage and easily found it. It was only distinguished from the other cottages round it by the pig-sty she had mentioned. The walls were composed of what an Irishman calls 'whattle and dab,' white-washed afresh every spring, inside and out. The floors were of stamped earth, and there were neither chimneys nor ceilings. The broad rafters supporting the roof served also as shelves for the crockery, and the knives and forks were stuck into slits along the sides of them. The

smoke of the fire had to find its way out through a hole in the thatched roof left for that purpose, or else out of the door, the wooden framework of which had become charred and blackened from the smoke of years. The house was of one story, and consisted of a kitchen and a 'room.' The foundations, made of large wooden blocks, raised it a couple of feet above the level of the small enclosure round it, and a rough verandah formed a sort of covered terrace supported upon slender unhewn tree trunks, along the front of the house. The windows were about eighteen inches square and could not be opened under any pretext; they were guiltless of blinds or curtains. One end of the kitchen was occupied by the stove, formed of blocks of stone. When these were hot, the whole house was warm. Round the walls hung strings of sausages and hunks of pigmeat 'smoking' themselves ready for winter use, long thin strips of *paprikás* bacon, and some balls of sheep's milk cheese. On a stone shelf above the stove reposed a mummy-like baby gurgling to itself and stretching out a fat hand towards the big iron pot and the large frying-pan beside it. On the floor in one corner stood a big jar of pickled gherkins and a sack of brown flour for making the huge loaves of bread that are baked in a wicker-basket under a mountain of hot ashes. Ovens are unknown amongst the peasantry. Some eggs lay in a wooden bowl, and a pitcher of drinking-water flanked a small bottle of *pálinkás*. Having discovered the house, I opened the little rough wooden gate and walked in expectantly: 'Is Mrs. Erzsi Takács at home?' I enquired of the girl who was chopping up melons for the pig (with a hatchet) at the edge of the verandah. She ran to kiss my hand,

and replied that her mother was at home and would be charmed to see me. She was the 'last-left daughter,' I afterwards found, and the mother of the chubby infant who lay cooing so contentedly on the shelf. Hearing my voice, the old peasant herself came out beaming with pleasure and drew me in through the kitchen to the 'room' beyond. It contained an oak bedstead, a table, a long bench, and a couple of wooden stools, in addition to the 'marriage-chest' that held all the family treasures. How proudly she drew my attention to the conventional tulips in red and blue, tied with a true lover's knot, that were painted on the front of it! Then she drew out her daughter's wedding-gown of dark blue frieze, coarsely embroidered all over in rose-buds of scarlet and green worsted, except in the front, where it would be covered by the linen aprons elaborately embroidered in red, blue, and yellow cotton. The girl had done all these herself, and was proportionately proud of them. Then her shirts ornamented on the front and sleeves by flax thread embroideries had to be duly admired, also her one pair of stockings —felt ones—and the oxidised clasps for keeping her tiny Swiss bodice together in front. A lock cut from the head of each dead son was treasured between the leaves of a big black prayer-book, carefully wrapped up in a large towel, and lying amongst a pile of pillow-cases with crocheted insertions let into them. Then she pulled off a sort of down quilt made from hen's feathers, and begged me to count the number of feather beds that stood on the bedstead. There were five, one on top of the other, and a straw palliasse underneath. Of course I congratulated her on all these evidences of comfort and affluence, particularly the feather beds and the dried

pig-meat. She smiled delightedly, and answered proudly, 'Yes, gracious lady, it is not every peasant who can boast of the like, is it?'

I gravely acquiesced, and returned to the kitchen to 'do her the honour of tasting her bread and cheese.'

There are worse things than sheep's milk cheese, but it is scarcely my favourite article of food; yet how



PEASANT SHARPENING HIS SCYTHE

could one refuse such hospitality? Down I sat on a wooden bench and ate a small 'porzion' washed down by 'a nip' of *pálinkás*, in a very decided atmosphere of wood smoke and onions. Then I thrust a florin into the girl-mother's hand 'to buy something for the baby,' and took my leave after an obligatory visit to *the* pig-sty.

During the whole four months of my stay in

Transylvania we had only three really wet days—rather a fortunate circumstance on the whole, perhaps, or I might have developed into a confirmed gambler, for we spent all our time on those occasions sitting with closed doors on the large glass-covered terrace, smoking and playing cards. We used to play every game under the sun, from Old Maid and Beggar my Neighbour to Ecarté and Baccarat. The stakes were usually very trifling, so that fortunes were neither lost nor won over them, though we always played 'for money.' To play merely 'for love' would be considered too utterly childish in Hungary. Some of the 'genuine old Magyars' of both sexes are so devoted to cards that they always carry a pack about with them in their pockets to be brought out and played with at any odd minute. I have known a cultivated countess who, by the way, did not smoke and was a strict teetotaller, sit down and play cards for hours with her maid and her cook, when there was nobody else available. People play cards there in the garden, in the carriage, in the train, in bed, in fact anywhere—even between the acts at a theatre and between the courses at a dinner table occasionally. There is as much excitement and gesticulation of joy or despair over the loss or gain of a florin as there is amongst boys over a penny at 'pitch and toss.' They are charmingly fresh, naïve, and childlike in many ways, despite their 'advanced' ideas on other points.

Violent thunderstorms occurred several times during August, also hailstorms of the most devastating character. These used to begin suddenly. A raging wind would arise; the air would be filled with dust; man and beast would run for their lives to the nearest shelter. Doors and windows were often torn off their

hinges before they could be closed; trees and shrubs were uprooted, roofs sometimes blown off bodily, and then came the hail. A blinding sheet of solid lumps of ice, about the size and shape of small pigeon's eggs, came rattling down furiously, breaking every pane of glass unless the outside Venetian shutters had been closed over them. Half an hour later the clouds had gone, the summer breeze whispered softly over a sun-bathed landscape, and we used to go out to pick up the shattered flowers regretfully and marvel at the ice-strewn earth. Once I gathered a tumblerful of these enormous hailstones and kept them in my room till they melted. It took them just about fourteen hours to dissolve into fluid, in the shade.

We usually rode in the evenings, and a few days after the very worst of these storms we made a long round on horseback that led us through several villages. Such a scene of desolation met us everywhere! The corn was beaten down even with the ground; the green maize and the potato-aulms had been cut off as clean as if it had been done by a sharp sickle; the half-ripened plums, grown for *pálinkás*, lay rotting on the ground: here and there was to be seen the dead carcase of a calf or a lamb; the houses were all shut up, and scarcely a dog or a peasant was visible. The storm had destroyed their 'little all,' and whole families had gone away on the tramp to try and earn a few florins by working on the harvest fields of their more lucky neighbours further south. Personally, these storms were a source of keen enjoyment to me. I always revel, with a sort of Byronic joy, in a raging, howling manifestation of Nature's powers. Perhaps it is merely a sign of incipient madness—who knows? Anyhow, it

always seems to me at such moments as though, for the time being, I were being permitted

> 'To mingle with the Universe and feel
> What I can ne'er control, yet cannot all reveal.'

Nevertheless, in spite of my own somewhat demoniacal sort of enjoyment, and even in the very midst of it, my pity for the ruined peasantry was profound. I wondered whether any of them were ever tempted to break through the resigned whatever-is-is-best feeling that they generally exhibit in the face of such catastrophes, and to follow the example of 'the most patient man who ever lived,' and 'curse God' in bitterness of spirit. It is so easy to be pious in the days of peace and plenty, but when it comes to homeless wanderings and possible starvation during a long, snowy winter, it must be very hard to say from the heart, 'All's right with the world.'

We went one morning to pay a formal call on the family of the headman of the village, whose little house and farm of thirty acres or so was almost opposite our entrance gate. It was neither different to nor better built than the rest of the cottages in the village, except that it was more spacious and had bigger windows. Besides the kitchen and the 'room' there was a dairy. He was 'a very rich man' in the estimation of his neighbours, and the farm labourers as well as the maids always addressed his wife ceremoniously as madame, and kissed her hand (verbally) when she paid them their wages every evening. This amounted to thirty kreutzers for ordinary work and forty kreutzers at harvest time. Sixpence to eightpence a day does not seem very generous pay even for a lazy Wallach, but he appears to be satisfied with it. This 'rich man' and his 'lady' con-

sidered themselves a most successful couple. They had made their three sons 'gentlemen.' The eldest was a lawyer, the second a priest, and the third a doctor. Their two daughters had also been provided with well-to-do husbands, and their sons-in-law lived in the house and helped them on the farm. The milking, cooking, &c., was all done by the mother and daughters, but there were two sturdy maids to scrub, wash, feed the poultry, chop melons for the pigs, and help on the farm when necessary. Not that the daughters disdained to toss hay, bind up corn, or soak flax themselves; they only drew the line at 'root-topping,' stone-picking and manure-carting.

'Madame' proudly drew our attention to their many luxuries. Feather beds without number, embroidered linen curtains at the three windows of the long room, *tulipános*-plates hanging beside guns and almanacs on the walls, a rug from the Bánát in front of the great oak bench, spoons of German silver stuck into the slits of the cross-beam, a couple of fine old pewter tankards and a bronze hanging-lamp that would have sent an antiquary into ecstasies, besides the usual supply, in larger quantities, of home-made linen and the family prayer-books 'with pictures in them.' Moreover, 'the room' had a deal floor, 'as white as white.' The whole place was the very pink of cleanliness and orderliness—according to Wallachian notions. When I admired the pewters in the kitchen the farmer's wife shrugged her shoulders and observed contemptuously that they were 'as old as the hills,' then led me back to investigate the beauty and wonder of a cheap modern cuckoo clock that one of her sons had given her. These are manufactured by the large colonies of Saxons settled in

various parts of Transylvania. The dairy was a funny-looking place. A wooden shelf ran round it to hold the brown earthenware pitchers of milk 'till the cream rose.' On the earthen floor stood a multiplicity of articles, including garden implements, washing-tubs, baskets, and jars of wine, besides a tall, upright churn and the wooden accessories for butter-making. The cream was churned fresh every morning during the summer, and the butter, after standing in water for a few hours, was beaten and then boiled down into pans and sent off weekly to Kolozsvár market. Butter in this form keeps well, and is used for culinary purposes all over Hungary. Once a week it was made into long rolls and taken in fresh to be sold as 'breakfast butter.' No salt is ever put into this, and you buy it by the kilogramme fresh every day. It is generally delicious; so are the tiny cream-cheeses, done up in a scrap of muslin; some of them are flavoured with sage. Before leaving we were regaled with slices of *koldczi* and glasses of pale yellow wine. The latter was a present from their doctor-son, who owned a vineyard near Máros-Vásárhely and came to see them every year. He was a very great gentleman indeed, the good woman assured us, accustomed to white rolls with his coffee, and meat every day of his life. The meals were always a great weight on her mind during his visits. Once she had even gone so far as to beg a few *semmel* from our cook and keep them specially for him; but he didn't care to eat them after they got stale and hard, so she had chopped them up with the hatchet and put them in the soup. It was a capital thought on her part, for everybody found them delicious. Both she and her 'master' were inordinately proud of all their children,

though he did little more than nod approval of his wife's garrulous assertions. A peasant woman everywhere always speaks of and to her husband as *urám* (my master), but, as a matter of fact, it is she who reigns and holds the strings of the money-bags—pretty tightly too, in most cases. He generally calls her *édes feleségem* (my sweet wife), and speaks of her respectfully as *az asszony* (literally, madame); but this does not hinder them from calling each other every insulting epithet under the sun whenever they happen to disagree over any trifle. Directly their passion is over they return amicably to the usual mode of address and bear no malice. Their bad tempers are like a straw fire—very vivid for the moment, but speedily burnt out.

CHAPTER VIII

Jewish penance on the Day of Atonement—Ázor and the other dogs—Sir John Falstaff—An aristocratic suicide—Hungarian oaths—Dancing in the stable-yard—*Mein Stern*—Birthdays and Namesdays—A morning call on the present Premier.

We were a household of dog-lovers, but only four were permitted to share the intimacy of home-life with us. The Countess had her pug, Gyp; her daughter, a black poodle, Castor; the Count, a beautiful little terrier, Diane; and I, a Swedish dachshund, Ázor. Out of doors, there was a huge, handsome fellow of Transylvanian breed called Vigyáz, several spaniels and two lovely little toy-terriers, who mostly resided in the harness-room, and were christened Jolly and Quick. Such mites! We had them when they were five-weeks-old babies, and didn't know how to bark. They were perfect darlings, and so clever! Ázor slept in my room on the sofa; he had long shaggy grey-blue hair, very short legs and a particularly ugly snout. He was of a quiet, reserved disposition—when let alone; but Castor used sometimes to teaze him beyond all endurance. Then blood flowed before harmony could be restored. Everybody considered him 'an ugly brute,' and strangers objected to him because he treated all their friendly advances with silent contempt, and would not be tempted to leave my side even for a big bone or a lump of sugar. He was fidelity personified, and I

am not ashamed to confess that I wept bitterly over our last good-bye, and missed my poor old friend dreadfully for months. He was 'only a dog' of course; but then we had been such close companions, such faithful lovers. Soon after, the Countess gave me his statue in oxidised silver. It is still one of my most valued possessions, and goes about with me all over the world, as a letter-weight.

There was a lawyer from Kolozsvár who used to come over occasionally on business. He always—quite involuntarily—made much sport for us. We nicknamed him Sir John Falstaff. He was a big man, with a big voice, and a big share of self-conceit; always boasting of his successes in forest, field and—boudoir; but the veriest coward in existence. Dogs of all species were a terror to him; cats he abhorred; horses were demons created to kill you at the earliest opportunity; cattle were creatures to be gazed at only at telescopic distance. It was comical to watch him with the dogs. Jolly and Quick could put him into a cold perspiration in no time, and Vigyáz was a horror indescribable, yet he had shot dozens of bears (so he told us) and had also fought wild-boars hand to hand. I'm afraid we rather encouraged these recitals of his adventures, and affected to consider him a mighty hunter, as well as an irresistible lady-killer. Nothing would induce him to sleep in a room alone, because he was so afraid of ghosts. We decided that his conscience must be heavily laden, poor man!

When taking my solitary walks abroad, five or six of the canine population generally accompanied me, and serious battles sometimes took place between them and the dogs of the herdsmen we frequently met with.

A dreadful *mêlée* occurred once, which was only brought to an end by each of us hanging on to the tail of one dog and beating the others with sticks meanwhile. I was especially sorry not to have been 'a looker-on' at that little game. It must have been full of such particularly ludicrous situations, which the surrounding groups of frightened sheep failed to appreciate, I fear.

Of course the *bárányosok* were kind enough to apologise profusely, and lay all the blame on the discourtesy of their dogs, but for my own part I think it was about six of one and half-a-dozen of the other. Castor was ever ready to stir up strife, Vigyáz simply loved a real good tussle, and if there *was* a combat, Ázor was always ready to do his share bravely. After they had been separated and scolded, none of them seemed the least bit ashamed of themselves, nor yet showed further malice towards their late opponents. Having tried their strength they, figuratively, shook hands with each other over the affair, like honest, well-bred gentlemen after a political fight, and went their way rejoicing.

One Saturday, before starting on my morning walk, I went down the street to the one shop of the village, intending to buy some little present for a godchild, the daughter of one of the married servants. This shop was also the only public-house of the place, and was kept by 'the Jew.' On entering the little wooden gate a strange sight met my view. Seated on the bare brown earth, with her back against the pig-sty wall, was 'the old Jewess,' clothed, literally, in sackcloth and ashes. Her greasy black hair hung in elf-locks round her face, and a poor broody hen, with its legs tied together,

cawed and clucked hoarsely from its roosting-place on the crown of her head. She was swaying herself backwards and forwards dolefully, muttering Hebrew sentences. The shop was closed. It was the Jewish Sabbath, but this had escaped my memory until that moment; however, on going round to the back I found the married daughter serving out *pálinkás* to several men, who brought glass bottles to fetch it in. She evidently salved her conscience by not allowing it to be drunk on the premises. I tried to discover what the old lady outside was supposed to be doing, but could not get any satisfactory explanation. The handsome, untidy, black-browed Judith only mumbled something about the Day of Atonement, and hastened to change the conversation, so I concluded that her unsavoury old parent must have been doing something extra wicked, and was then trying to propitiate the Deity by this form of penance. Just as I reached the outer gate, Mrs. Judith came running after me to request that I would negotiate a bargain for her with the fruit cart that was coming down the road, since they were debarred from purchasing anything till after sundown, and to-morrow would be our Sunday. I acquiesced, received twenty kreutzers to pay for it, and waited for the cart to arrive. She stood beside me instructing me as to the kind she wanted, and impressing upon me over and over again to be sure and not let myself be cheated. Of course she could hear every syllable that passed between me and the men, so she ejaculated about every other second in a harsh, screeching tone:

'Ah! my God! How dear! How ruinously dear! Such scoundrels these peasants are!'

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However, I took no notice of that, knowing that these fruit-growers are proverbially honest.

When the vendors had gone, and the fruit lay in her basket, she turned it over with her hand and remarked complacently, 'If we had been buying in a market, I should not have got more than half this quantity for twenty kreutzers, nor so fresh and ripe neither!'

How they all laughed when I got back to the house at the idea of an English girl being asked to oblige a dirty Jewess by buying fruit for her on her Sabbath!

About the middle of the summer a sad piece of news reached us. The Count's brother-in-law, a baron of very old family and great wealth, had put an end to his existence in a moment of despair. He had been ailing for months, and at last his doctors told him that his malady was cancer of the throat. Half an hour later he was left alone for a few minutes. When they re-entered the room he was lying on the floor already dead. The story of his tragic end was hushed up, and he was buried without any official enquiry. Their 'place' was a couple of hours' distance beyond Szt. Mihály. It was not long after this, I remember, that the Count wanted some turnips hoed, and a *kaloka* was decided upon by the steward. The bailiff, preceded by the gipsy band, walked through the village streets inviting the peasants to join him with their hoes. Men, women, and children all turned out gleefully, and away walked the whole procession off to the turnip-fields. There they worked all day to the sound of music and song, refreshed at intervals with chunks of black bread, tiny strips of *paprikás* bacon, and moderate potions in the way of weak brandy and water. By

six o'clock the work was all done, and the procession streamed back, crowded into the stable-yard and danced the rest of the evening away. They were given no further payment, nor did they seem to wish for any. They had received food, drink, and music; they had worked and talked and sung together, and the whole thing took the form of a holiday in their eyes. This is a custom dating from the time—not too far back either! —when every peasant owed his lord a certain number of days' free labour during the year, a sort of modern adaptation of the feudal system. The Wallach and the gipsy are content with very little in the way of wages, but you must not expect any great amount of hard work for this sum. They have neither the will nor the *physique* for anything laborious, and they cannot be hurried. They understand the art of strolling and dawdling better than any other people of my acquaintance, and are given to taking siestas at any hour of the day, if they only get the chance. The hurry and high pressure of this end-of-a-century seems to them the most foolish and unnatural phase of human life:

> 'Man wants but little here below
> Nor wants that little long'

they argue; then why not enjoy what falls to one's lot and do as little work as possible?

The bailiff (whom I hated for it) used to walk round in the harvest-fields cracking a great whip like a slave-driver, and I once caught him belabouring a gipsy with the butt end of his gun. He heard of that little incident again, for I rushed home in a white heat of indignation and told the Count, who merely laughed at me. How-

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ever, he forbade the bailiff to do that sort of thing again. What a bully that man was to his inferiors, and what a servile whine he used to put on to his superiors! I detested him, and always drew my hand away when he wanted to kiss it. He probably detested me also.

Hungarians all over the country are past masters in the art of cursing each other, but that *Szántártas* eclipsed them all for oaths.

Being of an emotional nature, they quarrel upon the smallest provocation and often howl aloud with rage at each other, but directly the fit is over they are ready to embrace again, and be as friendly as ever. You may use every insulting epithet under the sun, you may call down the curses of God upon the souls of all their ancestors, you may invoke celestial or demoniacal aid to bring down cancer upon their children and mildew upon their corn, and they will still forgive you; but say to them only once:

'You are a dog of a gipsy! You are no better than a beastly Cossack!' and undying hatred is the result.

Some nations live deeply in awe of his Satanic Majesty, but the Hungarians are not of this category. On the contrary, they seem to live on most familiar terms with him. Perhaps it is a case of 'familiarity breeds contempt;' and yet not so exactly, for the words 'little devil' form a term of endearment.

'Give me another kiss, you dear little devil!' cries the lover to his roguish, teazing sweetheart.

'Get out of my sight, naughty little devil!' says the high-born lady, playfully, to her importunate admirer.

'Well done, cunning little devil!' speaks the gipsy

approvingly to his son, who has just 'annexed' his first article.

'You should see her canter! She's a regular little devil of a mare!' tells a man to his next neighbour.

'Can she scrub and wash?' you ask. 'I should just think so, gracious Madame. She's a regular little devil for work,' asserts the peasant-woman hiring out her daughter as a serving maid.

But it is not merely as a term of endearment that his name is used. You may hear it a hundred times a day in a hundred different ways. In fact it seems as if there were no occasion on which it appears inappropriate. If your shoe-lace breaks, *az ördög* is in it; if the postman is late, *az ördög* is in him; if your maid pulls your hair in brushing it, you invite her to visit him; if your cook falls ill, you wish that he had taken her; if the Government goes out inopportunely, or a bank breaks, or an inundation devastates your property, or a railway accident kills your friends, or the Radicals beat you at anelection, you put it all upon the Evil One in a series of 'round oaths,' not to be surpassed by any Shakespearian hero. Whether you be man or woman, peasant or peer, Jew or Christian, Protestant or Catholic, pious or impious, it's all the same, *az ördög* is constantly to the fore.

On Sunday afternoons the servants used sometimes to dance in the stable-yard, and were often joined then by some of the peasantry or farm hands. We generally joined them too for a *csárdás*, and then I used fervently to wish that boiled butter had never been invented. Have you ever smelt it? If not, don't wish to do so, even in the open air. There was a very curious Wallachian dance that I enjoyed watching. It began

with an 'invitation à la danse' that was both barbaric and fascinating. The men took their places with folded arms and walked solemnly round in their big boots. Then one began to twirl, stamp, and knock his heels together, snapping his fingers towards the girl whom he wished for a partner. She joined him, and they circled round solemnly together, whilst another went through the same ceremony, and so on, till the whole number had paired, when a sort of clumsy waltz began. This was both graceful and uncouth, if you can imagine such a combination of adjectives in one substantive.

We determined to celebrate the Countess's birthday by some private theatricals; and taking into consideration the varied nationalities of the *corps dramatique*, the German language was decided upon as the one in which we should play, since everybody knew that fairly well. A translation of Scribe's clever little comedy 'Mon Etoile' was chosen unanimously as the very thing to suit us, and we set about the rehearsals with great spirit. There was a charming *soubrette* rôle for the young Countess, who emulated the Princess Pauline Metternich, so renowned for her talents on the amateur stage. I had the part of a wilful, coaxing daughter, and, being short of men, Mademoiselle undertook to 'make up' as my choleric, fat old father. The tutor, the secretary, and a grave university professor (who had come for a month to give a series of lectures on history and literature for the benefit of the young Countess) were all *prétendants* to my hand, and made love alternately to me and my maid in distinctly different styles. The professor, at our request, constituted himself stage-manager, and used to coach us up in our

parts. For a couple of weeks beforehand odd members of the company might be met with all over the place, at any hour of the day, talking, laughing, crying, or making love to themselves in an apparently idiotic state of mind that must have been very absurd to the uninitiated. But 'Mein Stern' was a decided success on the whole. The Count always sent for the gipsy band from the Kolozsvár Casino on any special occasion like that, and then much dancing went on indoors and out. In Hungary each person has a namesday as well as a birthday. Everybody knows the date of the former, of course, from the calendar, so your friends turn up in troops armed with bouquets, *bonbons*, or *marrons glacés*, to offer their congratulations and dance a *csárdás* in your honour. These gatherings are often very numerous and festive in character at a country house; in the town people only call and drink a cup of coffee or a glass of wine; but there are no gipsies and seldom any dancing.

The present Premier was married to one of the Countess's five beautiful sisters (who is since dead), and we drove about two hours' distance one day to pay them a visit. I forget whose namesday it was on that occasion.

The house was neither handsome nor spacious, according to our ideas, but it had a large and pretentious garden behind it, laid out rather in French-Dutch style.

The peasants round that neighbourhood have designated him the 'Iron Baron,' and he certainly seems rather of the Cromwellian type; he ruled everybody, even to his wife and children, with a rigid justice little short of tyranny. Personally he is of stern appearance and artistic tastes; he models flowers beautifully in

terra-cotta, and paints them in natural tints afterwards. I saw several big jars ornamented with raised flowers of his doing. He also carves oak remarkably well, and paints in oils—to a certain extent. His daughters were then quiet, subdued girls, who married soon afterwards at fifteen and sixteen years of age; then a transformation scene occurred, and they rapidly became specimens of emancipated womanhood. His son, then a delicate-looking youth, had, what I have read of in old books but never met with elsewhere, viz. a 'whipping-boy' to act as companion; to play with him when he was good and take his chastisements for him when he was naughty. This struck me as being a truly 'barbaric' idea. However, as premier, the 'Iron Baron' is a distinct success. He is far from popular, but he has known how to coerce the Church and force acquiescence from the Crown without losing office. He is a Conservative of the rankest old Tory description, who dislikes the Liberals and despises the People. To-day he is the man of the moment there, but a score or two of magnates of his kind would soon bring about a second Revolution. Hungary is not a Tory country. We had no dancing or gipsy music at his house; he did not believe in such frivolities.

There was one plague from which we suffered a good deal on hot days; that was a plague of gnats and mosquitoes. They used to cover our bodies with tiny bites that irritated intolerably, and often swelled up in big inflamed lumps the size of a bantam's egg. I remember once having my right arm bandaged up in poultices of earth mixed with vinegar for several days; it was so swelled and painful that I could not put a dress-sleeve on over it, and went about clothed in a loose white cambric dressing-jacket in lieu of a bodice.

CHAPTER IX

A visit to Temesvár and the Bánát—The Michaelmas Fair and a comical quarrel—Electric light—The river Tissa—Petöfy's Alföld—The 'crooked land' and the land of the Great Plain—The Alfölders—Debreczin and its veiled women.

At the end of September I went off on a tour to the great cities of the Great Plain, and reached Debreczin just in time for the big Michaelmas fair. All the towns and villages of Hungary Proper are built more or less like a military encampment, with a large open square in the centre, to be used as a market-place. Debreczin is no exception to this rule. If you were to look out on this square at dawn of day in the summer, as I did at a later period, you would shiver with alarm at the memory of peasant insurrections and frightful atrocities committed by infuriated agriculturists armed only with agricultural implements, for you would see it filled by ranks of men, clad in black sheepskin coats, peaked fur caps and big top-boots, standing with scythes or sickles over their shoulders; but these men are not 'revolted hinds,' they are merely needy folk waiting to be hired as mowers, or reapers, by their richer neighbours. Although it was September, the air in that lowland city was as hot as our midsummer often is. Overhead there was a burning, cloudless sky; beyond and around the city for miles and miles stretched a level greenish-brown country, brilliant in blinding light.

Flocks of geese and herds of swine roamed over the stubble-fields, and the long white roads were dotted with rattling vehicles and groups of laughing, chattering pedestrians, all dressed up in whatever of finery they possessed. The crowd that thronged the market-place when I drove into it from the station was an extremely picturesque one because of the variety of costume and of physiognomy displayed by the various nationalities who always attend this fair, one of the most important in the country. A delightful aroma of orientalism pervades the whole of Hungary, but in Debreczin this aroma is accentuated into something tangible. The women, young and old, go about with their faces half covered, almost in Eastern style. They do not wear the Turkish *yashmak*, but you see little more of the face than you do of the Turkish or Egyptian women's—just a pair of brilliant dark eyes and a tiny scrap of the forehead. Not a lip, or a nose, or a single lock of hair is visible; and as to their figures, you don't know that they possess any. Yet, after all, they are no more remarkable for prudery than their sisters in other parts who flaunt their feminine charms in the light of day.

Amongst the crowds, sturdy Alfölders were conspicuous in their white cotton divided skirts, their short blue jackets trimmed with many silver buttons, and their round felt hats with a rosette or a flower stuck inside the band. Girls with broad ribbons braided into their long plaits, and hanging in long 'streamers' from the ends, walked about in short, stiff, kilted petticoats that swayed about like those of a ballet-dancer at every step, and disclosed bare brown legs or top-boots, as the case might be. Slovâks with long, unkempt hair, loose tunics, confined at the waist by enormously wide brass-

studded belts, and wearing tiny embroidered white sheepskin coats over them, rubbed sleeves with Polish Jews in long greasy caftans, low shoes and white stockings, a corkscrew curl over each ear; and soldiers in blue cloth breeches, slipped inside of 'high-lows;' policemen wearing hard felt 'bowlers,' with a feather hanging over one side of the brim; *csabos* in breeches of white frieze, embroidered vests, and feet swathed in rags, or strapped in sandals; Servians in wide, baggy blue trousers and a red fez on their heads. Beautiful Roumanian women glided about with their soft, expressive eyes and exquisite peachy complexions, their skirts hanging in long, graceful folds, their tiny coloured bodices fastened with jewelled or oxidised clasps across their embroidered chemisettes, and bright silk kerchiefs bound quaintly round their heads. Dalmatians, too, moved gracefully through the throng in Greek-looking draperies, round felt turban hats, with white *puggerees* hanging down behind, and big gold earrings in their small, well-shaped ears; and sallow Bosnians strolled in a melancholy, meditative manner from stall to stall, silent and observant. Of course there were children too, of all ages and sizes, miniature counterparts of their parents in dress and appearance. Mischievous boys playing pranks on demure girls; coquettish maidens making eyes at shy lads; village Don Juans stealing away women's hearts; peasant syrens luring men into their silken fetters; old women gossiping; old men talking politics; buying, selling, bargaining, 'besting' going on everywhere. Such a buzz, such a chatter, such a clatter!

Rows of stalls piled high with delicious fruits and vegetables crossed the open square; downy peaches,

plums and grapes, some yellow, some purple, some white; golden-skinned, rosy-cheeked apples and pears, green melons, dusky purple damsons, magnum bonum plums, ripe figs, and almonds in russet skins, intermingled with cucumbers, tomatoes, huge red peppers, brown shelled walnuts, marrows, cauliflowers, beans, endive, lettuces, baskets of cress, bundles of carrots, huge white turnips, and strings of onions. There were roses too, of every hue that Nature or Art has yet produced, large creamy buds laying their soft petals lazily against leaves of bronze red foliage; delicate pink blossoms nestling amongst green moss, glowing crimson hearts as warm and rich and beautiful as young Love's dream, and dainty drooping Niphetos blossoms uncountable. I have seen trees out in the open in October with (literally) hundreds of these roses on them. The soil and climate in the central and southern districts evidently suit them.

There were other stalls too, heaped with big black loaves, balls of cheese, strings of sausages, strips of *paprikás* bacon, inedible-looking pieces of dried pig-meat, huge jars of pickled gherkins, of salted eggs, of boiled butter, pots of honey, sacks of dried pastry, called *tárhonya*, heaps of almond biscuits made in all sorts of shapes lay side by side with gilded gingerbreads, honey cakes, and walnut rolls. At the opposite end of the square the more practical commodities of life were displayed, generally on the bare ground. Pots and pans, rugs and silk kerchiefs, top-boots and delicate embroideries, the most beautifully shaped Greek-looking pitchers of the commonest earthenware, sheep-skin coats, cloaks, and caps, rolls of home-made linen, and hundreds of fringed aprons with borders woven in

colours, brass-bound belts, bright woollen head-shawls, cheap jewellery, hanging lamps, embroidered vests, red boots for Roumanian women, felt hats for men, embroidered shirts and vests, gay hair ribbons, agricultural implements, feather beds, 'marriage-chests,' crucifixes, Mass books, and all sorts of 'holy pictures' printed in gorgeous colours, and framed in the flimsiest of frames. Scores of large-sized pocket-handkerchiefs made of white linen and bordered either with cheap lace or crochet edging hung in strings like rows of little flags, and were a source of great interest to the girls, since an elegant article of this description is *de rigueur* on Sundays and all state occasions—not for use; oh, no—the tail of your petticoat is good enough for that—but to wrap your prayer-book in, coming out of church, or to dangle gracefully in your hand as you walk home, when it is put carefully back into the chest, and treasured up till the next time. There is immense rivalry about these pocket-handkerchiefs amongst all the women, young and old. The fortunate possessor of more than one displays this fact by carrying the grandest in her hand, and wrapping her book up in the other. The 'holy pictures,' too, generally have a circle of admirers round them, to whom the good-tempered vendors explain what they represent, and sometimes even go so far as to relate the legends connected with them in the case of saints, to the intense interest of a sympathetic audience, who listen spell-bound, only indulging from time to time in smothered ejaculations of 'Jaj! jaj! De Istenem! Jesus Maria!' and suchlike. There is generally an *Ecce Homo* amongst the pictures, at the sight of which everybody involuntarily makes the sign of the cross. They are very

reverential always. Crucifixes of carved wood, stone, or zinc are to be seen at frequent intervals along the roads, and no one, Protestant or Catholic, passes one of these without a salutation. The men raise their hats, the women cross themselves. In the fields, too, when the Angelus sounds, also at mid-day and three in the afternoon, everybody ceases work and mutters a prayer. Rosaries are generally sold by these picture dealers, but the buyers always take them to the priest to be consecrated before they use them. I spent hours on the balcony of my hotel watching all that went on below. A distant tinkling was heard, and the hubbub lessened; as it drew nearer the crowd parted and stood silent and bareheaded whilst a little procession passed. It was the parish priest in short lace-trimmed surplice and biretta, carrying the Host to a dying person, attended by his acolytes and the sacristan. After it had gone by the throng closed in again and the hubbub recommenced.

When I had feasted my eyes sufficiently I went down and wandered in and out amongst the people, bought a few pocket-handkerchiefs for distribution on my return to Szt. Mihály, invested in a 'holy picture' for my godchild, listened respectfully to a wonderful history of the noted St. Elizabeth, told in the most graphic and picturesque of language, and witnessed a scene at once striking, characteristic, and comical.

Several half-drunken men had taken hands and were wildly dancing round and round in a circle, laughing and shouting at the top of their voices. Now and again they would stop to fall on each other's necks with fervent embraces of 'brotherhood.' Suddenly

one man turned to his neighbour and said with tipsy gravity:

'But tell me now, my dear brother-friend, what is thy name, and where dost thou hail from?'

'That will I, dear brother-friend. My name is Pista Somogyi, and I come from Bánya-Ujváros; and thou?'

'What? Thou art Pista Somogyi from Bánya-Ujváros!' interrupted the first speaker with a howl of fury! 'And I have drunk with thee, have danced with thee, have kissed thee, and sworn brotherhood to thee! Jaj, jaj, jaj! Istenem! What a calamity! Why, it was thy cheating dog of a father that "did" my dear and honoured parents out of twenty kreutzers last Fair-day! And I have embraced thee! Jaj, jaj! Woe is me! Begone, I tell thee! Out of my sight, thou litter of a cur! Thou unclean spawn of a toad! Thou thief of a gipsy! Thou and thine are no better than thievish Cossacks!'

'Ah! Cossacks didst thou say? Cossacks indeed! It is thou who art a Cossack and a filthy gipsy. Devil take thee, thou howling drunkard!'

'I a Cossack? No, no; I am an honest man, and so is my dear father too. Begone, I say, from amongst honest men; this is no place for thee. Thy grandfather was doubtless a hog, thy grandmother a good-for-nothing.'

'Never mind them. Cossack indeed! We are no Cossacks! May thy forefathers' souls rot in hell along with those of thy father and thyself and thy whole family!'

'May thy wife bear thee dead sons and thy daughters be struck with cancer! May worms eat

thee alive, and thy father be blinded with lightning! May the dear Lord God Almighty strike you all deaf and dumb, you filthy Cossacks!'

At this reiterated insult Pista Somogyi, foaming with rage, snatched up an iron rake from amongst the wares of a vendor near, and rushed at his opponent, but was forcibly held back by some of the bystanders, who disarmed him and tried to pacify his wrath whilst his late 'brother-friend' was led off in the opposite direction weeping and lamenting:

'Jaj, jaj! Woe is me! Woe is me! Twenty honest, hard-earned kreutzers thieved by that rascal's scurvy father from my dear, honoured parent! How much good wine could we not have drunk for it—good, mellow, purple wine without a touch of acid in it. Twenty kreutzers! Twenty whole, round kreutzers did those dirty Cossacks steal from my poor old father. Jaj, jaj! Woe is me! Woe is me!'

The ludicrousness of the whole scene struck me, and yet it was really a serious matter. This quarrel meant an unending feud between these two families, for had they not each called the other a Cossack? And all for the sake of a miserable fourpence!

Thoughts of German metaphysicians and the Infinitely Little crossed my mind.

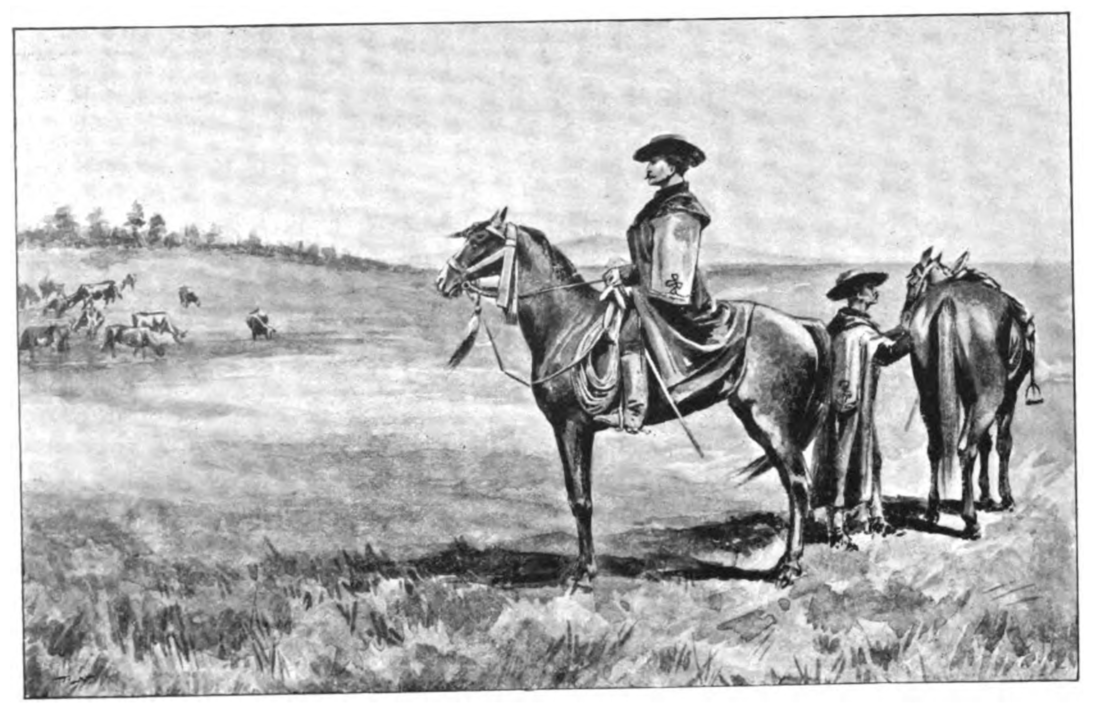
The fair lasts for two days without cessation. Those people who dwelt in the neighbourhood packed themselves into their rattling vehicles and galloped off home, laughing and singing, about nine o'clock, and re-appeared the next day; but the rest remained enjoying themselves till all hours, and then lay down in their waggons to slumber off the effects and wait till daylight came. At the public-houses people were snoring

on benches, on tables and *under* tables too, the obsequious waiter informed me, and all the courtyards were also crowded with waggons full of sheepskin-enfolded sleepers. Personally, I scarcely slept at all—the noise outside was too great. Almost before the roysterers had got well off, the daily supplies of milk and vegetables began to rumble into the place, and the water carts were creaking to and fro over the big square, where the scavengers had swept away yesterday's refuse. Lots of folk brought their own provisions with them, and everybody brought fodder for his own horses. The variety of purchases that got collected into those rough, roomy waggons amused and astonished me when I paid a visit on the second day to some of the court-yards, where they stood in rows with their two, or sometimes three, little, long-tailed horses tethered behind them. Here and there, small booths had been fitted up with long tables covered with red linen cloths, and rough benches beside them, to do duty as eating-houses for those who had not been thrifty enough to bring their own provisions. A couple of hungry-looking gipsies were playing on screechy fiddles in some of them; in others sallow Servians were tinkling funny little zithers. The *menus*, hung outside, were as cheap as they were varied, and the viands appeared to be eaten with great gusto by those who went in and ordered them after long examination and discussion of the bill of fare outside. Few of the intending customers could read, but one of the proprietors generally stood near at hand to assist their choice and name the prices of each article. I wondered who cooked the things and where, till I found a portable stove and some braziers round at the back keeping whole pots of *turos*

csusza, gulyás, paprikás-czirkét, leckvár-taskerli, and other peasant dainties that were ready made, hot. Some people bought bread, cheese, and bacon at the stalls and took them into the wine shops to eat, 'topping' up the meal by a purchase of fruit or cakes afterwards.

There was a good, energetic gipsy band in all the big wine shops, and you could hear the stamping and finger-snapping of the *csárdás* going on perpetually in one or the other of these.

It was not until the fair was quite over and done with that I was able to hire a sort of two-horse, open vehicle, with a couple of sturdy little horses and a sober man to drive them, and go on my way from Debreczin, across the Alföld to Arád. Of course I could have gone much more easily, much more quickly and much less expensively by rail, but then I should have missed such a lot. The wayside inns, the tiny, desolate hamlets, the peasants in their homes, the sunsets and sunrises, the storks and herons standing on one leg majestically and meditatively amidst reed-grown pools. And the adventures that I was always deliciously expectant of, but which never came! Possibly the reality of them might have been less enjoyable than the anticipation, though. We had to drive many miles before I felt that I had really got on to Petöfy's beloved Alföld, for, day by day, civilisation robs it more and more of its romance. There is not a *szegény legény* (horse stealer) left in the land! The vast, bottomless swamps, one of its specialities, have been transformed by drainage into acres of smiling cornfields, where some of the best wheat in Europe is grown, and a railway runs right across it from Pest to Kolozsvár. Good roads are being made in every direction, too, and



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the only dangers you have to cope with there nowadays, are an unexpected earthquake like the one that reduced Agram to ruins, or an inundation like that which proved so calamitous at Szegedin. But, in spite of the changes effected by energy and capital, Progress has not had it quite all her own way. There are yet districts in which Nature rules supreme. On the far-reaching Alföld it is the majestic *Nothing* that awes and impresses you. There are neither trees nor pastures, neither hills nor dales, neither flocks nor people. Simply miles and miles of *Nothing*, arched over by the blue of heaven; but, if you look closely, you will find on the sand the tiny traces of fairy footsteps. It has its own peculiar fairies as well as its own peculiar grasses, flowers, birds and insects. *Fata Morgana* is the sovereign who queens it over them there; but she shows herself more rarely every year. Silence broods over all, and subtle, fitful shadows chase each other across the 'large neglect' of this broad expanse, where patches of long knotted grass and charming water weeds wave and toss feebly in the balmy breeze. Wild ducks and moor hens share the shelter of 'withied' swamps with the heron, the crane, and the stork, and gaze without a sign of fear or trepidation on the rare passer-by. They are like the people who dwell in the primitive villages, simple, confiding, and self-respecting. A well-known Hungarian who has made the Alföld his special study calls it 'a genuine little America where Democracy in her noblest form enjoys the most perfect development.' He had evidently not visited America, nor made the acquaintance of the Americans, when he wrote these words. To my mind, they give a totally false idea both of the Alföld and its people. To begin

with, the Alfölder 'flies from a coat of arms like a devil from the smell of a censer.' This is the true spirit of a democrat perhaps, but not of a democrat from the United States. *Tout au contraire!*

They are *as* they are because they are mostly colonists there, and have never had lords over them; when the rest of Hungary groaned in the throes and pangs of serfdom, the dwellers amongst these sands and swamps were their own masters—poverty-stricken, it is true, but still free men. In the years since then, they have also remained their own masters, because they are thrifty and not goaded onwards by a desire for wealth. The lust of gold and the pride of life have not yet reached the Alföld hamlets, though churches are few and far between, and religion at a low ebb amongst them.

The highlander and the lowlander are as strikingly different in character and temperament, as they are in appearance and costume. The latter speaks contemptuously of the mountainous portions of the kingdom, calling it 'the crooked country,' and looks upon its inhabitants as a race inferior and pitiable. They know that a highlander must work three times as hard as themselves to make even a scanty livelihood, that he must live on maize-porridge, or rye and barley bread, and be content with goat's milk, cheese, and a modicum of *slivovitza,* whilst they feast on wheaten bread, mutton *gulyás,* dried pig-meat, and potato-cakes. 'Our country is as straight as the path of honour, and as open as frank sincerity!' they cry triumphantly, pointing to the rolling billows of waving corn that make their great plain golden at harvest time. But, to the highlander this 'straightness' seems mere

monotony. The Karpathians are his ideal of beauty; the only sort of home worth calling home. His soul is filled with the poetry of their blue misty peaks and snow-capped heights, their deep narrow valleys and black crevasses, their pine-scented slopes and sunny pastures, their raving torrents, their blustering storms, their roaring cataracts. He, in his turn, despises the silence and nothingness of the Alföld, its prosaic farmers and their fruitful farms. These highlanders have few conscious thoughts and no conscious ideals; but, unconsciously, they are permeated by the soul of Nature which is always poetical in her every mood and her every phase. Equally unconsciously to himself it is the inherent poetry of the Alföld that fascinates the lowlander, though he would strenuously deny this fact. In his eyes poet and vagabond, poetry and foolishness, are synonymous terms; but, for all that, he is steeped in it. Occasionally, very occasionally indeed, this permeating influence develops genius—a type of genius, too, that is full of musical cadences, full of originality, full of buoyant impetuosity, full of impatient unconventionality and honest frankness. Such a one is Sándor Petöfy, the greatest lyric poet of Hungary. He is as fearless, as shrewd, as many-sided as our own Shakespeare, yet in reading his 'Pearls of Love' you are constantly reminded of Burns, of Byron, of Eric Mackay. He was patriotic as Béranger, tender as Alfred de Musset, satirical as Juvenal; yet his 'Cypress Leaves from Etelka's Grave' are mournful-sweet and passionately sorrowful as Tennyson's 'In Memoriam.' Still, in spite of all these comparisons, his works retain a character of their own. No matter what he wrote, or how he wrote it, it remains always

the typical outpouring of an Alfölder, and that Alfölder a Sándor Petöfy. Knowing these people intimately, it is easy to understand the wrathful sorrow, the indignant protests of the sturdy peasant-farmer against this disgraceful tendency to poetising for a livelihood in his only child. It is easy to conjure up the scene where the irascible old fellow bids him to 'take himself and his vagabond notions out of his decent house for ever;' to go forth 'and make his own bed, probably in some ditch, and then to lie upon it;' but never to 'go back there whining for assistance;' the tender-hearted mother weeping meanwhile, heedless of the exasperated oaths cast at her, from time to time, by her infuriated husband.

Poor father! Poor mother! Poor son! Parental pride and filial affection are two of the strongest qualities in every Magyar heart; yet parents and child were only being goaded on to tear out each other's vitals by that divine, resistless power which, for want of a better name, we call poetic genius. However, there was a reconciliation again later on. When the land was ringing with the name and fame of Sándor Petöfy, and the old butcher-farmer saw that even poetry could be 'made to pay,' he was only too glad to have an excuse for opening his heart and his arms to the son, who was equally ready to fly into their embrace, and wipe out all old scores between them.

They were characteristic lowlanders, the whole family of them; sadly lacking in the gentleness, the poetic melancholy, the instinctive courtesy of the highlander, but, on the other hand, more practical, more clever, and more far-seeing. The lowlander is more violent in his passions too, and rougher in the gratifica-

tion of them, yet nobler and better hearted, perhaps, on the whole. Each has his own particular vices, quite as much as his own particular virtues, but in one respect their tastes agree. They both love music, song, and dance, just as they both love Nature; only it is Nature under different aspects that charms them, and it is sound under different conditions that fascinates them. The Alfölder loves the soul-full sound of the violin, the 'cello and the czimbalom; the mountaineer thrills at the clear, delicate vibrations of the zither, the sweet reedy notes of the wooden pipe, the ringing echoes of the horn. The Alfölder thinks a good deal of comfort but nothing of show. To plant a flower-garden round his abode would seem to him nothing less than tempting Providence, and any ornamentation, inside or outside, beyond the 'holy picture' over the family bedstead, he regards merely as a useless waste of good money; 'a house with peacocks and pine-trees round it cannot go on for long,' they remark sententiously if a man plants a few firs or a woman keeps a jar of flowers on her table.

He has very strong convictions on the point of over-population and never permits himself to have more than one or two children to provide for. He looks upon the 'round dozen' olive-branches of the highlander as a sure sign of his senseless stupidity and want of fore-thought. A wealthy man is at liberty to do as he thinks fit, of course, but a poor man (he argues) with a large family is a fool who breeds beggars. His conversation, like his character, is terse and to the point. Conjugal fidelity is not one of the domestic virtues amongst them; men and women alike are hopelessly immoral in this respect—so hopelessly immoral that they can

see no immorality in their actions. It is following the bent of human nature, they contend, and therefore not to be gainsaid. If the Creator had expected things to be otherwise He would have created humanity differently.

Of habitual drunkenness there is very little, though a great deal of wine is consumed constantly. Sometimes the Alfölder beats his wife—but he never kicks her, or jumps upon her, or throws knives and other missiles at her, like many Englishmen are in the habit of doing. If he did, he would speedily find that such conduct 'does not pay' there. He would be boycotted far and near, insulted by his neighbours and horsewhipped by his wife's people. That style of punishment is more rational and effectual than any amount of 'summonses,' police-courts and paltry fines.

As a matter of fact, there is nothing of the bully or the ruffian in his character. He respects womanhood, even in his wife; besides, to degrade her would be to degrade himself. He never steals, or tells lies, but if he can get the better of you in a bargain he is happy. That is your own fault, in his opinion, and a perfectly justifiable mode of doing business. Yet, should you be in want and go to him for assistance, you are perfectly welcome to anything he can spare, as a matter of course. He never offers it to you though; if you want it, you must ask for it frankly and without preamble. He expects no gratitude from you in return; your thanks embarrass him, rather than otherwise; he has only done what you would do for him, or anyone else, and it is very stupid and tactless to make a fuss over it, he pleads.

This is the Alfölder as he lives and moves and has

his being, and a very lovable person he is too—when you get to understand him.

The sun had long set and a grey-blue haze enveloped the twilight world as we drove into a quiet little hamlet about eight o'clock on that first evening. The reed-thatched huts nestled together as if for company, and storks had built their huge nests on many of them. Swamps and marshes filled with reeds and 'withies' abounded in the vicinity, and huge flocks of ducks lay crouched together under open reed-covered outhouses. A few dogs raised their heads and blinked lazily at us as we passed; here and there a lean cow stood or lay meditatively chewing the cud (of her reflections, apparently, to judge by the surrounding absence of pasture and hay-ricks). What did she live upon, I wondered?

We enquired the way to the inn from a man leaning over a gate stolidly smoking a long, carved, wooden pipe.

'The inn?' he answered slowly; 'I don't know, I'm sure.'

'Is there an inn here at all?' questioned my driver.

'Not that I'm aware of,' answered he.

'Well, why didn't you say so at once, my good man?' I asked a trifle impatiently. It was getting late and I was very hungry.

'Because you didn't ask me,' he replied.

'How far is it to the next village?'

'Which village?' he demanded cautiously.

'The nearest village.'

'Oh! The nearest village is about two hours' distance from here,' he said decisively.

'Is it a large village?'

'Well, no; scarcely that!'

'Is it as small as this?'

'By no means.'

'I suppose there is an inn there?'

'Ah! that I can't tell you.'

'Haven't you ever been there?'

'Why should I go there?' he enquired, in a surprised tone.

'Well! This is rather an awkward predicament to be in.'

'Yes, it is,' he acquiesced.

'It's getting so dark, and damp and misty too.'

'You are quite right, it is,' he concurred, glancing round.

'What would you advise me to do?'

'I really don't know,' he answered, scratching his poll.

'Could I get a bed anywhere in the village?'

'I really don't know.'

'Are you married?'

'Of course I am.'

'Is this your house behind you?'

'Of course it is.'

'Couldn't your wife give me a "shake-down" somewhere for the night, d'you think?'

'Of course she could, if that's all you want. Be pleased to alight and come this way.'

I got out, told the driver he must forage for himself and his horses, and followed my host into the hut. His wife sat crouching over a smoky wood-fire shivering with ague.

'It is one of her bad days, poor soul!

'Linczi! Here is a stranger, benighted in our

village, we must give her shelter,' he said, and went out again.

'Of course, of course,' she replied without moving. 'Aren't you going to sit down on that stool near you?' she enquired a moment later.

I sat down and remarked that she seemed very feverish.

'Yes,' she answered unconcernedly, 'but I shall be all right again to-morrow. It is the five-days ague; it is not so bad as the three-days ague from which some of my neighbours suffer.'

'Do you all suffer from ague here?' I asked sympathetically.

'Of course; it comes from the swamps around.'

'Why doesn't somebody drain them?' I suggested with the usual civilised ideas of a westerner.

'Drain them?' she cried. 'You don't know what you are saying. Why should we wish to drain away our livelihood?'

'Your livelihood? What do you mean, my dear soul?'

'Are not reed-mats and wicker-baskets our only source of livelihood? and how could we make either of them without swamps to grow the reeds and the "withies" for us?'

'You are right, quite right, my good woman; I did not know what I was saying,' I answered humbly. 'I am a foreigner, you know; that accounts for my ignorance.'

'You are not an Austrian?' she questioned doubtfully.

'No, I am not an Austrian. Why do you ask?'

'I hate the Austrians!' she answered with a frown.

Wishing to change the conversation, I enquired:

'Have you any children? I don't see a cradle anywhere.'

'No, I sold the cradle last Fair-day; it was only in the way now there is no one to sleep in it.'

'Is your child dead, then?' I asked softly.

'Yes, they are all dead! All three of them!' she answered with a deep sigh. 'It was the ague that killed them; it kills nearly all the children here; so we made up our minds not to risk it again, and I sold the cradle to a woman, who lives amongst the cornfields, for her daughter's child.'

'Ah! It must be very sad to lose one's children. Were they all babies when they died?'

'Yes, it *is* very sad. We lost them, one after the other, in less than a year after they were born, and when my husband set to work to bind the withies into a tiny coffin for the third, he said to me: "Linczi, this is the last time I can do this; it cuts me to the heart."'

'Poor fellow! I can well believe it. Does your husband get the ague also?'

'Of course; but, fortunately, *his* bad day and mine do not fall together; so there is always one of us well to feed the ducks and look after the reeds and withies.'

I was famishing, but she made no move to offer me anything in the way of food. After a brief pause I remarked: 'A long drive makes you very hungry, doesn't it?'

'Yes, it does indeed.'

'Could you manage to give me something to eat, do you think, my good soul?'

'Of course; there is bread over there, and plenty of pickled gherkins in the jar beside it. There are a couple of hard-boiled eggs in the bowl too, and some

wine in the bottle on the shelf. Pray, help yourself to any of it. You'll find a knife there, and a tumbler also.'

I cut myself a huge slice of delicious wheaten bread, took the two eggs, and poured out a half-tumbler of wine. When I had eaten that, I was still hungry.

'May I help myself to some more bread?' I asked my pale, hollow-eyed hostess, half apologetically.

'But surely, surely,' she answered in a surprised way. 'There is plenty there, and wine too.'

Presently the husband returned, his pipe still between his lips, his hat on his head, and sat down on a stool between us silently. 'Has the driver found fodder for the horses and supper for himself?' I enquired of him.

'I suppose so. He did not come back, or I should have seen him from the gate.'

'If I only had the cushions out of the carriage, they would make a bed for me on the floor here with my mackintosh and rug,' I observed.

'Yes,' they both assented.

'Would it be possible to find the driver and ask him for them, I wonder? What do you think?'

They shrugged their shoulders in unison.

'Would you mind going with me to look for him?' I asked, turning to the man.

'Of course not. Let us go at once,' he replied, getting up.

Though the air outside was malarial, it was pleasanter to my lungs than the fœtid atmosphere of the hut, and I felt tempted to make my bed in the carriage. It was only a fear of the three-days ague that deterred me. I was thankful that the man brought his

pipe into the house. Even bad tobacco is better than boiled butter, onions, and the general stuffiness of a place that is never ventilated. The driver was not to be found, but we came across the carriage, appropriated its leather cushions, and retraced our footsteps. The harness and my slender portmanteau were left out all night; there were no thieves in that hamlet, the man informed me quietly.

My cushions were spread as a mattress in front of the stove, my host and hostess retired to the bed in the corner, and the lamp was turned out, but I did not sleep much. My host snored, my hostess moaned and shivered, all sorts of insects crept over me, bringing in their train shudders of disgust. At the first streak of dawn I got up, lifted the latch, and went out into the cold, grey, misty morning; but it chilled my very marrow, and I was soon glad to turn in again and try to warm myself. Why is it that the cold seems to take every vestige of strength out of you? An hour later they both awoke and got up. They had nothing much to do in the way of dressing. Ablutions and hair-dressing were luxuries reserved only for Sundays and holidays. A pair of frieze knickers with a full skirt and loose jacket to match doesn't take much time to put on, and top-boots are only needed out of doors.

I lay still with my head in the opposite direction, until the man had left the room, then I sat up on my cushions and said: 'Good morning, madame!'

'Good morning to you also!' she replied.

'I hope you are better to-day?'

'Oh yes, I am all right to-day.'

She began to move about the room doing various things.

'Are you not going to light the fire?' I asked.

'I will light the fire when you get up out of the way,' she explained simply.

I got up without delay.

'There was no need to move,' she said, 'the fire can wait.'

It was pleasant to watch the cheery blaze. She fetched the iron pot with some soup in it, and put it on to 'hot up.'

'Have you no milk?' I enquired. Onion soup at six o'clock in the morning was rather a trial.

'No, we have no milk; we don't keep a cow. Some of the neighbours do, for the sake of the children. Milk is insipid stuff for grown-up people to drink.'

I felt sat upon. When her husband came in, however, I explained that being accustomed to milk in the mornings my stomach craved it, and I should be much obliged if he could get me a little somewhere. He went off willingly and returned a few minutes later with a brown pitcher holding about a pint. This was put on the stove to heat, and after disposing of that and a big slice of bread I went out to look up my driver and start on my onward way. I found him harnessing the horses, and went back to bid farewell to my kindly entertainers.

'Tell me, Linczi, how much I am indebted to you for your timely hospitality?' I said, with my purse in my hand.

'Indebted?' she queried with raised eyebrows. 'Why, nothing, of course. Why should you be indebted to us?'

'But my night's lodging, my supper, my breakfast? You must let me pay you for them.'

'Not at all! What an idea! We are not innkeepers, my husband and I. We gave you what you were in need of, that is all. There was no bargain between us. We do not want your money. If you wish it, you can stay another night. There is plenty to eat for three of us.'

It was no good pressing her further; she would have been offended. When I thanked her cordially, she only looked at me a little curiously.

'If you were not a foreigner, you would understand that there is no need of thanks. We are not heathen here, that we should refuse food and shelter to a wayfarer.'

'Perhaps you are right, little mother!' I answered, laughing and shaking her heartily by the hand. 'Good-bye!'

'God go with you and a safe journey to you!' she cried as she turned on her heel and went off to feed the ducks. These ducks, when full-grown, are killed for the market in the nearest town, and their feathers are made into beds and pillows. Feeding them was an important duty not to be neglected for lengthy farewells with strangers and foreigners.

CHAPTER X

On the road to Arád—Wayside inns and peasant vehicles—Wine, woman, and song—Agriculture and commercial prospects of the Alföld—Return to Szt. Mihály in a blinding snow-storm—Skating and sledging—A wolf and a wild cat—A false step in the dark—Rat episodes—Wallach women—Hermannstadt—A Wallach funeral—Hamelsdorf and Saxon toilettes—Interiors—Hiltau and its fortress church—Wallach villages—The male Wallach—A Bible Christian—Saxon marriages.

Our first halt was at a large village where a small market was going on. I went off on a foraging expedition amongst the market people whilst the horses were having a good feed, and brought back a whole armful of eatables to the carriage. Thanks to my scanty breakfast and the keen morning air, I was simply ravenous. In addition to several slices of wheaten bread spread thickly with butter, I had purchased a bottle of wine, some walnuts, several bunches of grapes and some delicious pears. My driver had also supplied himself with bread and a strip of *paprikás* bacon I noticed. Then, seated in the fly, with my provisions spread around me, I enjoyed a hearty meal and chuckled with glee at my late experiences. What a large amount of knowledge human nature can assimilate in twenty-four hours! It seemed to me that I had grown richer since yesterday to the extent of a practical lesson in resignation, contentment, and hospitality, all given gratis. Experience

has generally to be bought. About two o'clock we reached a village where an important-looking modern brick building with two chimneys and a slated roof announced itself as the general shop and the inn of the place.

I knew it was also 'the Jew's,' before a pack of little carroty-haired Hebrew children surged round the vehicle gazing at me with wide, curious eyes. Telling them to stand back, I got out and went up the two stone steps to the door, held open for me by a slatternly, obsequious Jewess, who invited me politely to enter, cuffed the youngsters who crowded in after me, and set a dirty chair in front of the table for me to sit upon. I pretended not to notice it, and enquired what she could give me for dinner.

'The foreign princess might have anything. There were ducks and chickens in the yard, vegetables in the garden, a butcher's shop in the village, and Frankfurter sausages in her own shop; moreover, she was an accomplished cook, and her cookery would be sure to please my palate.'

I doubted this last assertion, doubted it *very* much indeed; but I forbore to question it, and decided upon the sausages, which were ready cooked. She was most anxious to give me fried potatoes with them, but I declined to wait while they were cooked. Visions of goose-grease, rancid butter and oil floated before my inner consciousness. Which would she choose as a medium to fry the potatoes in? I shivered and gave a decided negative to her reiterated persuasions. Not for worlds! The wine she offered me was good, but weak. It struck me that she must require a plentiful supply of water in her establishment; not for washing

purposes. Neither she, nor her bairns, nor her house, nor her clothes appeared to suffer much in the way of ablutions. The Magyar peasant rarely washes himself, it is true, but he constantly puts on clean clothes. His garments on Sundays and holidays are always immaculate, and he objects to soil them more than he is absolutely obliged, even at his daily labours; the Jews, on the contrary, are just as dirty in their habiliments as they are in their persons, which is saying a good deal.

The Jews are undoubtedly a remarkably talented people commercially; but they are most unscrupulous. There is a good deal of anti-Semitic feeling in some parts of Hungary, not, however, springing from a religious basis. As a matter of fact, there is very little bigotry and even less proselytising amongst the Hungarians. Everybody is at liberty to worship how, when, and where he pleases. His religion is entirely his own private affair, with which no one else has the smallest right to interfere. Yet that the Jews are disliked, despised, and treated coldly is an undisputed fact. Why? Well, the cause of this instinctive anti-Semitism is not far to seek. The Hungarian is, as a rule, unambitious and unbusinesslike. The Jew is greedy of gain, ambitious, and a thorough man of business. Every hour of the day he manages to overreach and 'best' some poor fellow-creature, and, having once got the upper hand, he is merciless in his extortion. An instance of this came under my notice at Szt. Mihály. A peasant-farmer, in a moment of stress, borrowed twenty florins, to marry his daughter with, from 'the Jew,' and agreed to pay him six florins for the loan of it and return it at the end of a month. In the meantime his wife fell ill, lingered on in a bedridden condition for

about a year, and then died. During her illness things went wrong on the farm: a calf died, the pigs did not fatten, the poultry strayed away, the butter went down in quality, there was no one to make the cheese. In addition, there was a doctor's bill to pay and, worse than all, funeral expenses and priest's fees. The poor man had been unable to repay the twenty florins, so the Jew had exacted six florins per month interest the whole time. For the last couple of months he did not press payment, but when he applied for his twelve florins and declared that he must also have his capital back without delay, the man supplicated for time, and offered to hire himself out to his creditor, in part payment of the debt. The Jew, however, was like adamant. The florins he must have, then and there; if not—— The next day he returned with a Hebrew notary, a friend of his own, who made a valuation of the land and everything on it, put it down a trifle less than the sum owed to him, and adjudged him owner of it in lieu of the money. The peasant was turned out a beggar from the little home of his forefathers, and the Jew rubbed his hands gleefully over this cunning transaction.

Such a summary procedure, it is needless to say, is quite illegal, but what peasant would go to law about that, or anything else? If there is one thing that he distrusts more than another, it is 'the Law,' which, in his opinion, is nothing else than a diabolical agency for first ruining a man, and then clapping him between four walls to keep his tongue quiet. If he has any tangible notion of hell at all, it is embodied in the word gaol; and sooner than run any risk of tasting its horrors, he would rather let himself be flayed alive by the Jews.

And this reminds me of a horrible tragedy that took place in a Transylvanian village during that summer. The peasantry there had just such another Jew as our Itczi in their midst. For years and years he had lived amongst them and become by degrees the possessor of farms, flocks, and herds. The widow and the orphan were his particular prey, and one morning, after he had turned a dying woman out of her cottage on to the road, his fate overtook him. Her neighbours found her dead by the roadside, with a little child crying in her stiffening, emaciated arms. They took her corpse up and carried it away, and their hearts burned within them. There was, indeed, an inhuman devil in the world, one who abode in their village and sucked the very life-blood from their veins. The news spread like wildfire. This brutal act was 'the last straw.' Even a worm will turn, and these worms turned to take a terrible revenge. The men and women gathered together in silence—their hearts too full of vengeful thoughts for words. They only looked at each other with gleaming eyes and set teeth. At last one man spoke: 'He is a damned devil, a veritable limb of Satan, no human beast could act as he acts. Time after time he has skinned us (figuratively), let us skin him now, as one skins a squirming eel.'

'We will, we will! So help us God, we will!' answered a chorus of deep, indignant, hate-breathing voices; and *they did.* Next day the 'Pester Lloyd' gave a long account of the barbaric vengeance practised on a Jewish inn-keeper. He had been skinned alive and then plunged into a cauldron of boiling water. Naturally, arrests were made by the police, and somebody suffered the death-penalty; but this truly cannibalistic

act was not without its effect on some of the Jewish usurers. One fine morning we heard that our Itczi had made a moonlight flitting of it, and his place knew him no more; still it was very quickly filled by another of his compatriots, whose wife was the handsome Judith for whom I bought plums on her Sabbath.

But to return to my obsequious hostess on the Alföld. Whilst I ate, she hovered round, making civil speeches in servile terms. That the high-born lady was a princess anybody could see with half an eye; that she was also a foreigner the exquisite charm of her accent denoted; but might she take the liberty to enquire whence the foreign high-born princess came and whither she was bound?

'Certainly. The princess came from Debreczin and was on her way to Árád,' I replied calmly.

'Debreczin, Árád; but those were both Alföld towns. The high-born princess was doubtless given to making jokes, and a poor Jewess was, of course, fair game; but——'

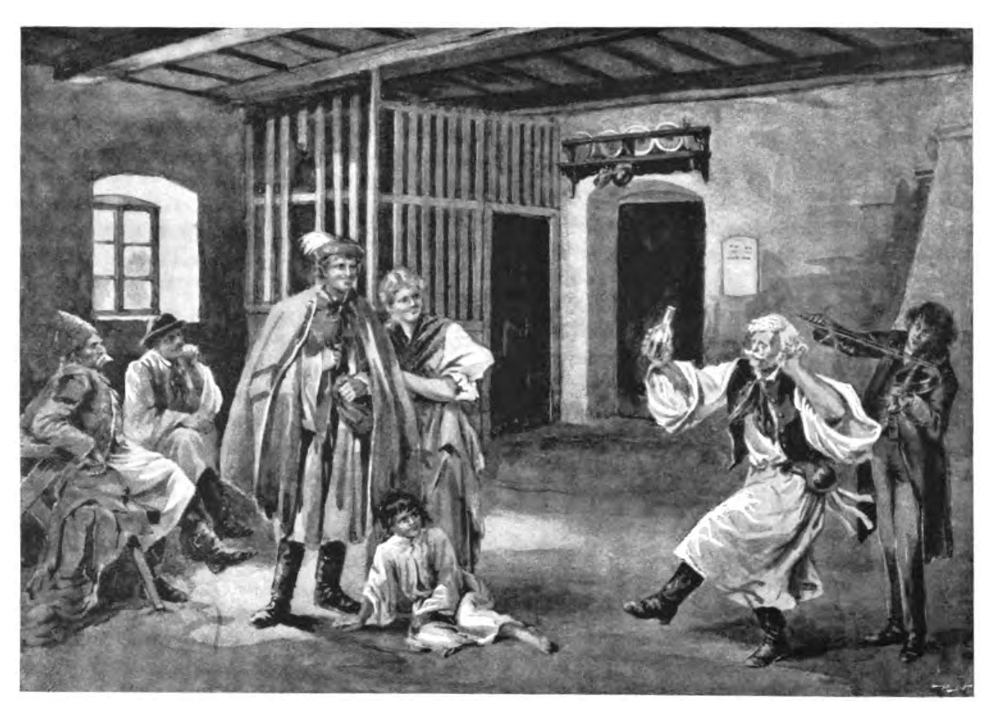
'The poor Jewess might at least go about her own business and leave her customers to do the same,' I interrupted coldly.

'Ha, ha! What wit the high-born princess possessed! She was evidently just the right person to send upon a secret mission.'

'Possibly.'

'It was perhaps the Russian Government who had sent the high-born princess on a mission to Bulgaria?' she suggested in oily tones, bending down confidentially towards me.

'If the Russian Government should ever send a secret mission for the extermination of the Jews, I certainly



AT 'THE DROPPER-IN' CSÁRDA

know one house that will deserve a cross against it,' I replied in a tone of disgusted annoyance. Her breath was 'oniony,' and her apparel smelt of filthiness. How could I eat with that unsavoury specimen of curiosity beside me? She drew back a step or two, heaved a deep sigh of disappointment, and went out to cross-examine the driver.

When I asked for the bill, she said 'Two florins,' without a trace of embarrassment on her greasy countenance. It was an exorbitant charge, even to a 'foreign princess.' The food I had swallowed, in such disgust, was not worth more than twenty-five kreutzers at the outside. Whilst getting into the carriage, the dirty youngsters came crowding round, scuffling to kiss my hand and begging in whining voices for 'a little kreutzer,' which I took care not to give them. They did not appeal to me; though some of the Jewish babies in Budapest used to steal my heart away—they were just like dirty-faced little angels.

Late that same evening we reached the outskirts of Árád and drove to a small inn kept by an acquaintance of my driver. The hostess was a typical Magyar; she bustled out to receive me and help me to alight, greeted the driver cordially, and listened attentively as he made known my wants, before taking his leave. When I handed him the sum agreed upon for our journey, adding to it a trifling gratuity for wine, he carefully counted it aloud, thanked me politely, kissed my hand, raised his hat, and departed in high spirits. Then we went into the house. There was a 'room,' with a bedstead in one corner, a rickety sofa covered in green rep, a cheap pier-glass over it and an oblong table in front of it. This was to be mine for as long as I pleased, and my hostess

promised to send in supper immediately. She had a big dish of *turos csuszá* just ready to be eaten; and would I drink red wine or white? I grew very fond of *turos csuszá* in the end. It is made from a pastry consisting of rye and barley-meal stirred up stiff with salt and water, rolled out very thin and cut into tiny squares, which are dropped for a few minutes into boiling water, strained off, dried, and turned into a frying-pan with some crumbled curd and bacon fried into crisp dice. After being stirred together over the fire for a minute or so, this is turned into a wooden bowl and eaten very hot. The recipe sounds barbaric, I admit, but a plate of this with a slice of bread and a glass of good Hungarian wine makes a meal at once nourishing, satisfying and palatable. A couple of gipsies with fiddles, four men, and two girls were grouped about the kitchen, smoking, talking and singing. I was too tired to sit up a moment longer than was absolutely necessary, but I left my door ajar and lay in bed listening to all that went on as long as I could keep awake. My bed was opposite to the door, so I could see everything that happened in the kitchen, where the inmates appeared to have forgotten my very existence. Whilst eating my supper I had watched a half-drunken peasant dance a *pas seul* in his divided skirts and huge top-boots, a bottle in one hand, a glass in the other. He clinked these together periodically, singing at the top of his voice a favourite vintage song:

'Red, red, red, is the wine that flows in my glass,
Ruddy-haired is the woman I hold upon my lap,
Her fair round arms enfold me in a warm embrace;
And, how I long to kiss her,
But, no, no, she saith.

'Good Friday is a day when feasting is forbidden;
A pretty wedded woman forbidden fruit is, too.
Yet to your tempting lips my very soul doth fly,
And how I long to kiss them!
But, no, no, you cry.'

Upon reaching this point he tried to kiss one of the girls, who kept pushing him away and crying out good-humouredly, 'Keep your distance, please! keep your distance! I am not for such as you. I am already bespoken!'

This rejection of his amorous attentions caused roars of laughter at the man's expense, but he seemed to take them quite in good part, and after paying his score took his departure with a hat flourish and a friendly farewell: 'A happy good-night to all of you, and may you sleep well!'

'The same to you!' chorused the party round the fire.

Scarcely had the door closed on him before the gipsies struck up a melancholy folk-song, which a particularly merry-looking girl began to sing with heart-rending expression:

'Volt szeretöm de már ninosén
Ö volt az én drága kincsém, &c.
(Time was, I loved; that time has gone,
My sweetheart too; I now have none.
His love most precious was to me.
'Tis lost! Would that I dead could be.
Oh Death, that I thy face could see!
Life is too sad, too sad!)'

Then there was more conversation, more laughter all about nothing in particular, whilst the hostess washed up the supper-things, stopping in her work from time to time to join in a discussion, or give her version of

some episode. The gipsies were devouring the remnants of the *turos csuszá* and gnawing ravenously at the crusts of bread thrown to them good-humouredly by the kind-hearted woman, a rosy, buxom person about thirty-five years of age, the picture of healthful happiness, good temper and thrifty housewifery. How I longed for the pencil of a Deffregger and the pen of an Auerbach to carry away with me such a charming *genre* picture 'in Bild und Wort.' It was in the thick of these pleasant reflections that I suddenly fell asleep, to find, when I next opened my eyes, that the sun was shining in at my tiny windows and the cheery hostess thudding about in her bare brown feet carrying cups of wine to some customers on their way home from market. When they had gone I called out: 'Madame!'

Thud, thud, came the bare feet across the kitchen, and a bright face was popped in at my door.

'A happy good-morning! Did the gracious lady call?'

'The same to you. Yes. I want some water and a basin to wash in, also a piece of soap and a towel.'

'Certainly. In a minute it shall be here.'

Shortly afterwards it *was* there—in a tiny wooden bowl about the size of a saucer, and boiling hot. An infinitesimal piece of soap and a beautifully embroidered towel were deposited beside it on the table with an air of triumph, and my hostess stood smiling and curious to watch my mode of procedure. Would the gracious lady like a spoonful of boiled butter for her hair? she enquired when I had done all that was possible in the way of ablutions.

'No, thank you, madame; I never put anything of

that sort on my hair. It is not the custom in my land.'

'Na! Then that accounts, no doubt, for the fairness of the gracious lady's hair, and it is like silk too,' she replied, touching it softly with her fingers. 'Does everybody have hair like this in the gracious lady's land?'

'Not everybody; but a good many people.'

'Ah! They must be beautiful!'

'Not so beautiful as you brown-haired Hungarians, to my mind,' I answered.

'Brown-haired? Yes, we are that, it is true. One of our prettiest songs says so:

> 'Eyes of neither grey nor blue
> But of tawny velvet hue,
> Head with nut-brown tresses laden
> Is the real Magyar maiden.'

After my toilette was completed she enquired briskly: 'And now what will the gracious lady take for breakfast?'

I suggested 'coffee.' She demurred slightly. She could easily run out and buy some berries at the shop close by, but she had nothing to make it in. Would hot milk do with a glass of brandy in it, and some slices of bread and butter? I accepted this compromise—minus the brandy—and went to take a stroll until she should beckon me.

Soon a shout of: 'Nagysád, nagysád, a reggelli!' reached my ears, and I went in to find an enormous bowl holding at least three pints of milk standing beside a plate of very thick bread and butter plentifully sprinkled with carraways, on the table in my room.

Why on earth didn't she bring me this bowl to wash in? was the first thought that flashed through my mind as I began to drink the hot milk with a big spoon, and wonder whether she expected me to gulp the whole quantity down. My appetite is perhaps scarcely 'lady-like,' I own, but such a jorum as that was rather appalling even to *my* blunted sensibilities. Churches, market-places, theatres and public promenades are always my favourite lounging-places in a strange city. It is astonishing how much an observant observer can learn of a people by watching them under these varying aspects. Tragedy and comedy, poetry and prose, idyll and farce, piety and blasphemy, refinement and vulgarity are all there, plainly to be seen and understood by 'the one who looks on' without participation.

There is just one point that often strikes me in meditating over the productions of that Zolaesque school of writers who flaunt as their watchword the motto: '*L'art pour l'art.*' Why do they paint always so graphically the vice, the vanity, the indecency of the most prosaic prose of every-day life, whilst they limn only in the faintest colours all the beauty, nobility and poetry that is inherent in the human race?

'*L'art pour l'art*' is a fine motto; a broad, all-embracing definition of the word truth—for art in its highest and best sense *is* truth in its truest and noblest form.

To see humanity as God sees it, and to paint them thus, should be the aim of every literary *artist* in my humble opinion. To portray only the very noble and high-minded, or the very ignoble and vicious, is alike false, it appears to me, since the great majority of people

in the world are neither very good, nor very bad, but merely possess

'The awful mystical human soul—
The soul that grovels and aspires in turn—
The soul that struggles outward into light
Through lips and eyes that burn.'

Why chronicle the grovellings with detail and elaboration and take no heed of the aspirations?

Árád is a prosaic provincial town celebrated for its delicious fish of different species, caught in the river Maros on which the town stands, and its manufacture of *tarhonya*, a kind of dried pastry much used for soup and puddings; it rather resembles semolina, and is, I believe, made from maize flour. Comparatively few of the churches in Hungary are beautiful, though they possess an interest peculiarly their own. In form they resemble the modern 'tin church' except that the chancel is rounded. The small windows set high up near the roof make the interior dark and gloomy and give a fortress-like appearance to the exterior, so that their claims to architectural beauty are almost nil, but some of the old pictures at the back of the high altars are dim, dusky masterpieces. Árád is no exception to this rule regarding ecclesiastical architecture.

The Protestant churches are generally frankly hideous, and the ministers always wear the long black Geneva gown. The barrenness of the Communion table, covered with a crimson cloth, is, however, relieved by a pair of enormous brass candlesticks of the very handsomest design, holding gigantic wax candles.

About five o'clock in the afternoon I returned to take my ease at my inn and rest my tired limbs whilst conversing with my hostess. We soon became confi-

dential, and she told me, amongst other things, that she was in a great quandary. Her maid-servant had been taken ill the day before, and she was at her wits' end to know how to get through all the work till her return.

'Is it likely to be a long illness?' I enquired.

'Oh no; the child arrived a couple of hours after she left here, and she's going on capitally; but she won't come back under ten days or a fortnight, I'm sure; she never does. This is the third time I've waited for her, but she's such a good girl I'd rather wait than hire another.'

'The third time? But why doesn't the man marry her?'

'Which of them does the gracious lady mean?'

'Which? Well, . . . either of them?'

'Oh! They're all too poor for her to *marry* them. Her father wouldn't give her to either one of them. She's a beauty, you know, and rich too. Such hair, such eyes, such a tongue! She's never at a loss for an answer to anybody, gentle or simple, and she can dance any man down in the *csárdás*, I assure you. She'll make a good match, when she *does* marry; that's very certain. Why! her dower won't be a kreutzer less than fifty florins, besides linen and feather beds and poultry. Yes, indeed, gracious lady, the man who gets her for a wife may deem himself a very lucky fellow. How she does laugh and sing all day at her work! It does one's heart good only to hear her.'

'But, the three children and these . . . goings on?'

'Pshaw! Gracious lady, what of them? That's nothing to do with her husband! Besides, hasn't he done the same himself with other girls? Can he ex-

pect better than he gives? No, no; justice in everything, if you please.'

I was silent, but, like the far-famed parrot, I thought all the more. A new light had been cast upon a perplexing subject. Presently the good woman began to set about her preparations for supper. We were to have *krumpli nudli.* I begged permission to assist in preparing them, which was readily granted. A large pot of potatoes had been boiling 'in their jackets.' These were now strained off, skinned, mashed with salt and flour into a paste and rolled into 'worms,' then dropped into a pan of boiling lard and thrown into a hot colander to drain as soon as they were cooked, then turned into a big dish, sprinkled with bread-crumbs and popped into a hot oven for ten minutes. These are excellent, I can assure you, and 'Madame Irma' made them to perfection. She seemed to be a very capable plain cook. For my dinner she had given me roast chicken with pickled-plum compote, followed by 'jam-bags.'

In the evening, as I sat writing, the door of the 'room' was opened and Irma's voice asked:

'May I come in to introduce my daughter to the gracious lady? She has brought her baby to show him off.'

'Come in, come in, all of you!' I replied cordially.

One of the loveliest peasant girls ever seen followed her mother into the room, holding in her perfectly moulded bare brown arms one of those swathed bundles that I had learned to recognise as infants. People who have never had the advantage of becoming personally acquainted with these quilted coverlets, tied with ribbons, in which young children are enveloped, have

really no adequate notion of the meaning of the words swaddling clothes. One of these 'eingewickelt' babes may be laid on a shelf, under a table, in a manger, or anywhere else, in perfect safety and with perfect comfort, especially if a dog be left in charge of it.

Marushka, as her mother called her, was not more than sixteen years of age, but she had been married a year ago to a youth whom she adored. From their babyhood up through their childhood and school-days they had been playmates and lovers always. When she was three and he five years old they had decided to marry each other as soon as they grew up; and since the match was a suitable one on both sides, there had been no impediment to their private plans. He was an only son and his mother had loved her daughter-in-law all her life, so Marushka was almost as much petted in her new home as she had been by her own people.

'How happy you look, Marushka!' I said smilingly.

'Yes, gracious lady; the dear Lord God Almighty has been very good to me. My husband is nothing less than an archangel of goodness, and our baby is a perfect cherub. We have everything heart can crave; there is absolutely nothing left for us to wish for! Sometimes we are even a little afraid of our great happiness, and ask ourselves and each other, What have we done to deserve it? Life is so much easier and more comfortable when you are married to the one you love. We are frequently telling people that, both of us; but then, as they say, *we* were lucky; it is not everybody who can marry as we did.'

She was quite right. Ideal marriage is rare.

'May I not go and see you in your home, Marushka?' I enquired later on. 'I should like to

make the acquaintance of your husband and his people.'

'But please do. If the gracious lady will go back with me now, my "second mother" and all of them will feel honoured and really most glad to see her. We live quite near.'

We went out together, carrying with us the swathed, sleeping bundle, and were welcomed cordially a minute later by a bright, cheery, brown-haired woman of forty.

A tall, good-looking young fellow, about nineteen, with sun-browned features and long, pointed moustache, was shyly and proudly introduced as 'My husband.'

After kissing my hand and giving me a seat he crossed over to a bench that ran along the wall, sat down beside his young wife, and put an arm round her waist without a sign of self-consciousness or embarrassment—just as he would have done if she had been his sweetheart—and bent over to look at their baby. Whilst the old couple talked to me about many things the young couple sat side by side, carrying on a subdued conversation between themselves. The whole scene impressed me as being that most beautiful of all things—an idyll in real life. The four figures and their picturesque surroundings exhaled an atmosphere that was, to use an expressive German phrase, *kern-gesund*. It was a scene such as Petöfy and Burns would have delighted to portray in simple, unpretending verse. There was nothing forced, fictitious, or *posé* about it.

'Nay; song and love and lofty aims
May never be where faith is not;

Strong souls within the present live,
The future veiled—the past forgot:
Grasping what *is* with hands of steel,
They bend what *shall be* to their will;
And, blind alike to doubt and dread,
The end for which they are fulfil.'

These were the words that echoed through my mind later on as Marushka, at her mother-in-law's request, sang to me song after song to her husband's accompaniment on the czimbalom—an instrument resembling a dulcimer, played most skilfully by many of the lowlanders.

Over the whole extent of Hungary, by the way, I remarked that though both sexes seem equally musical, they yet show their talents in quite distinctive ways. Almost every woman has a full, rich, pleasant voice, and seems to sing instinctively, but she rarely plays any instrument. The men, on the contrary, play various instruments remarkably well, but they can scarcely ever sing—except in church, and then it is always a drone of a particularly nasal description.

New songs are daily 'born in the air' amongst the peasantry, nobody knowing quite how or when they come into being. One peculiar feature about these folk-songs, too, is that most of them begin with an illustration from Nature, as you will observe in the following ballads that Marushka trilled forth in a rich mezzo-soprano voice for my edification.

How many stars shine on the floor of heaven!
How many times my thoughts are all of thee!
Didst thou but love me half so leal and true
Our passion would be stronger than the sea.

How tenderly my mother loved her child!
How oft she warned of man's inconstancy,

Of youthful ardour, brief, as warm and wild.
Alas! alas! Why do I still love thee?

How ruffled is the face of Balaton!
A fisher o'er its waters rows his boat
Trawling; and singing o'er his well-fill'd nets
(He little knows his sweetheart plays him false).
Like Balaton my heart is ruffled too.
My grief is like the rocking boat upon it;
My love was once the helm, my soul the sail.
Ah me! My life is wrecked, for hope is gone!

In my little garden grows a rose-tree,
On it grows a lovely crimson bloom!
In my heart a red-cheeked maid I cherish,
And my love for her can never perish.
Brown-hair'd maid, with roses red,
And crimson kerchief on her head.

Ah! How muddy is our country lane
After autumn rains have soak'd the dust.
But worthy, worthy is the girl I love
Of all that can a youthful lover move,
And I my top-boots muddy make
Willingly, for her sweet sake.

With csárda hat set jauntily,
And deckt with perfumed rosemary,
I'll stroll adown the village street.
How all the girls will smile on me!

Wrinkled my top-boots are, and long,
Upon their heels gilt spurs shine bright;
They'll clank the time to dance and song.
How all the girls will smile to-night!

How rosy are the apples grown in Bákony's glade!
How plenteous is the dower a goodly orchard yields!
My love is a brunette, a bonny winsome maid.
Such pretty maids, I ween, dwell not in northern fields.

How delicate the taste of Bákony's tempting pear!
How many golden fruits each laden bough reveals!
My love has soft blue eyes, pink cheeks, and sunny hair.
Such pretty maids, I ween, not every copse conceals.

How late the summer stars arise!
My love for thee was late in rising too.
But what is that, or aught, to me?
Why is thy glance so icy cold?
My heart burns hot with love for thee!

How two stars circling in the sky
Follow each other ever faithfully!
But what is that, or aught, to me?
Wert thou my sweetheart, love, then I
True as that star would follow thee.

Look at the roses in that garden fair!
A maiden culls them gaily in her lap.
Blue are the eyes God has bestowed on her,
Deep is the wound their rays have given my heart;
But from her soft red lips one ardent kiss
Could heal that wound and turn my pain to bliss.

Surely the pretty rose-bud gatherer fair
Knows she herself is sweetest 'mongst the flowers!
Blue are the eyes God has bestowed on her,
Deep is the wound their rays have given my heart;
But from her soft red lips one ardent kiss
Could heal that wound and turn my pain to bliss.

I could have listened all night to these quaint melodies, grave and gay, that succeeded each other almost without a moment's pause, but at last the mother interposed and bade Marushka bring me some refreshment.

After I had drunk a glass of wine and eaten a slice of bread and butter, the 'old man' got up to escort me home. As a matter of fact, he was not more than

forty-seven or forty-eight, but, being a grandfather, he was dignified by that title. I wished the family good-bye feeling that I had spent a delightful hour amongst them, in spite of the bad tobacco and the lingering aroma of ancient onions that filled the house.

On getting back to the inn I found a large company assembled in the kitchen, talking, laughing and singing. Of course a couple of gipsies had turned up as usual, and were fiddling away for dear life. Their wild-looking, dark visages put me in mind of ancient magicians who could sway men's minds by a stroke of their wands. The wand of the poor *czigány* is the bow of his fiddle, often of the very cheapest description, but potent as a priceless Straduarius. Wayside inns in Hungary generally rejoice in very quaint titles. This one was called 'The Dropper-in,' and had the usual sign outside, viz. a long pole with a wooden ring at the end and a gigantic wine-bottle suspended from it. The system of keeping the scores is primitive but practical. The regular customer and the inn-keeper each have a bit of wood called *rovás*, with the name of the person written on it, and every litre of wine consumed is marked by each making a notch on their respective bits of wood. When the score is paid off both the *rovás* are burned. Consequently you hear the peasants inviting each other to '*igyon rovásomra*,' literally, 'drink on my notch-stick,' which sounds most comical.

These *csárdák*, like our own old-fashioned inns of coaching days, have been immortalised both in prose and verse, and for much the same reasons. To-day, it is the club of the peasant class, where the newspapers are read aloud, the crops discussed, political speeches made, and the latest items of gossip enlarged upon

between whiles. There is a popular saying current on the Continent to the effect that we English take our pleasure sadly. By paraphrasing this, it may be made to fit the Hungarians equally well, however, though they are so extremely unlike us in ideas and temperament.

When the Hungarian enjoys himself, he is sad. Now this *sounds* very similar to the other aphorism, but it means something entirely different. It means that the average Hungarian will dance with streaming eyes, singing meanwhile a doleful ditty to an air full of heart-break and human woe; that he will cut a silver button off his jaunty coat and throw it to the musicians, shouting in the words of a popular folk-song:

'Play, gipsies, play so mournfully
That your notes may rend my heart.'

It means, too, that presently he will cast himself on to a bench, lean his arms on the table amidst the bottles and glasses, put his head down on them and sob audibly even in his soberest moments; for the flood of poetic melancholy, his heritage for ages past, finds its only outlet in the songs of his country.

But this is only when he is having a good time and *thoroughly* enjoying himself; on other occasions you will find him a cheerful, practical, every-day sort of person, with a keen eye for business and no nonsense about him.

I had determined to drive to Temesvár the next day in a peasant cart that had been recommended to my notice by my host and hostess; it belonged to a friend of theirs, who would, they assured me gravely, not overcharge any customer of theirs, foreigner or otherwise.

We started about nine o'clock, and I spent most of the day reclining lazily against my bed of hay, gazing and dreaming. You cannot have an idea how comfortable hay is (covered with a rug, of course) unless you have experienced it. We stopped in the middle of the day at a tiny *csárda* to dine and to rest the horses. It was white-washed, thatched, minus a chimney and dedicated : 'To the vagabond.' When the wrinkled elderly woman lighted a wood fire with hospitable alacrity to warm some soup for me, the smoke filled the house and went out at the doorway. So did I. But as soon as my potato soup had been 'hotted up,' the fire went out again and I went in. This course was followed by a thick slice of bread thickly spread with salt and a glass of red wine. The meal concluded with a couple of ripe pears that my Árád hostess had put into my lap when starting. This doesn't sound a luxurious dinner, but I thoroughly enjoyed it, and laughed when the 'gude-wife' demanded only twenty-five kreutzers in payment. It was the first time that I had ever dined for fivepence.

We reached Temesvár just in time to see the glowing sun sink into the 'blond' Tissa, a river that sometimes proves rather a nuisance to the towns and villages on its banks, being decidedly 'an unruly member' of the great society of rivers. It is so distinctly broad-minded as well as deep; and objects most strongly to be curbed in any way. Towards the Tissa Engineering Company it evinces the utmost dislike, and seems always to be cogitating new dodges for circumventing them and breaking bounds. When it does succeed in doing so, it takes the opportunity of revenging itself for past indignities by devastating the whole country for miles and miles round, drowning as many of its enemies as prac-

ticable, and washing away all the towns and hamlets in its course. Poor Temesvár is especially the object of its most violent demonstrations, but she takes it pretty philosophically. Directly the waters have subsided, she sets to work and rebuilds herself in next to no time. Indeed, she feels rather grateful to wrathful Tissa in some respects, because his boisterous revenges have turned the eyes of Europe on her; subscriptions and government grants have flowed into her coffers, and she has been enabled to outdo her rival Debreczin, and constitute herself as undisputed capital of the Bánát. Temesvár is like Kolozsvár, an essentially Protestant city, but there are a good many Servians in the neighbourhood who have their own places of worship. There are several good hotels where you can get whatever you choose to order, but these are, as in all Hungarian towns, very high in their charges. For many years past the streets, shops, and many of the private houses have been using the electric light, which is under the charge of an Englishman sent out by the firm known in London as the 'Brush Company,' and electric cars are to be seen everywhere in the broad tree-planted streets.

The next evening I went on by train to Szegedin, another city to which the Tissa objects even more strongly than she does to Temesvár, and upon whom she has conferred the same benefits by her violence.

Szegedin is modern, energetic, and up-to-date in every sense of the term. She and Debreczin were also once rivals; however, those days are past. She has asserted herself; she has toiled and moiled (whatever that may imply!) for years, but now she reigns as the supreme mistress of the Alföld.

Debreczin is a city with a brilliant past. Did not

Kossuth and his parliament sit there for months? Has it not seen battles and sieges innumerable whilst Szegedin was still 'only a village'? So Debreczin rests on her oars and prides herself on 'the days that are no more.'

Szegedin, knowing that she had no past to rhapsodise over, determined to make for herself a future, and year by year she goes a big step forward, leaving Debreczin further and further behind. Her people are the best artisans and the most commercial in character of any in Hungary. Her fish, her *paprika*, her *tarhonya*, her sail-cloths and ropes, her carpets and embroideries, her shawls and friezes, bring her in wealth and trade that increase annually. She is a Roman Catholic city, though creeds of all kinds are practised within her gates, but it is to a Protestant that she owes a good deal of her ascendency. The Emperor knew his man when he appointed Lajos Tissa, the brother of a former premier, as royal Commissioner there.

Roman Catholicism is the established faith of Hungary, and the bond between Church and State is a very close one. When the Civil Marriage Bill was first mooted, a cardinal-archbishop, discussing it privately, was asked: 'If it should be brought into Parliament, what attitude does your Grace intend to take?'

'I shall oppose it might and main,' he replied firmly.

'But if, in spite of opposition, the Bill should pass?'

'Then, my friend, I shall remember that I was a Magyar and a patriot before I became a Prince of the Holy Church, and I shall bow to the law of the land.'

The Bill has passed and the clergy have submitted themselves.

The Hungarian Protestants hold a position about

on a par with the English Nonconformists. Many of the great Roman Catholic families will not permit their children to marry into Protestant families, but the latter are not so particular. There is, on the whole, extremely little bigotry in any class, however. The Roman Catholic dignitaries have the reputation of being haughty and worldly. An anecdote, which is, I believe, true, is related of a Count Batthyány, who was made a bishop in 1790 at a ridiculously early age. He was driving one day in his old age over the Danube bridge between Buda and Pest in a superb equipage drawn by six magnificent full-blood horses, when a young man well known for his Radical principles and poetical enthusiasms, stepped up to the carriage and stopped it. 'Bishop,' he enquired abruptly, 'Our Saviour Jesus Christ always went on foot, and barefoot too. How is it that you, one of His representatives, always drive about in such a splendid equipage and live such a life of luxury and lust?'

'My son,' answered the white-haired prelate calmly, 'you seem to forget that Jesus Christ was only the son of a poor village carpenter, and that I am a wealthy Magyar nobleman.'

That young man perished later on the scaffold. The bishop, however, died in his bed in the odour of sanctity.

Mr. Hardy would doubtless call that the irony of fate. The present primate is the son of a peasant. When he gives great state banquets in his palace, his aged father and mother, attired in their accustomed costumes, fill the seats of honour, and are conspicuous figures where full dress is *de rigueur* for everybody else.

I have never been introduced to the primate, but I became slightly acquainted with two other great eccle-

siastical dignitaries, both of whom were charming, high-bred men with delightful manners, beautiful hands and the most melodiously persuasive of voices. They were also very good-looking, tall, and finely formed.

These 'princes of the Church' all wear rings of a sacred character, one of the badges of their office, which people are supposed to kiss on welcoming them or bidding them adieu. However, it somehow went against the grain with me to do that, so I compromised matters by giving a hearty British shake to the hands held out to me, and knowing me for a heretic as well as a foreigner their owners did but smile indulgently at my lack of reverence towards them. Village priests and their curates are, as a rule, anything but polished or cultured men. It is not by any means uncommon to see them turn away during the performance of High Mass to scrape their throats noisily and then expectorate vigorously. A spitting priest combined with a *buttery* congregation combine to render public worship rather a trial to a person of sensitive, refined tastes. Most of them indulge in comely young housekeepers, and the number of 'nephews and nieces' you hear of is appalling. Euphemism has its uses even nowadays! Still, it is the tenets of the Church that are to blame rather than its servants, I suppose. The study of theology can transform a man into a priest, but it cannot exorcise all the human nature out of him.

The people of Szegedin are a thriving, cheery set, with plenty of shrewdness and commercial ability. Unlike most other towns, there are comparatively few Jewish traders there. They are also an educated community, and send a large proportion of students to the University in Pest. They have not yet attained to the

dignity of a School for Higher Education, nor can they boast of a Free Library, two possessions upon which Debreczin prides herself; but they are able to afford to send their sons and daughters to be educated at the metropolis, a fact of which they are no less proud.

Letters of introduction to one of the doctors in Szegedin had been given to me, so I drove straight there, and received a volubly cordial welcome. For the first time in their lives they were to have the honour of entertaining an English lady. How all their neighbours would envy them! They hoped that my visit would extend itself to weeks, that they might have the pleasure of making known the neighbourhood to me. They could not speak English themselves, but what matter for that? Did I not speak German beautifully and French to perfection? As to my Hungarian conversation, it was delightful to listen to. I rather demurred at these statements, for my very partial knowledge of *accent* was always bringing me into the most embarrassing situations. It appears to me as though there is no language under the sun—unless it be Chinese—in which a foreigner finds so many pitfalls of pronunciation as Hungarian. The same word with a different accent on the vowel sound means half-a-dozen things, and when you fondly imagine yourself to be making a complimentary remark, or stating some simple every-day action, you suddenly discover from the facial expression of your auditors that you have been perhaps swearing most horribly, or (what is even more embarrassing) descending to gross obscenity! At one period my experiences of this character were so painfully awkward that I gave up attempting to speak the

Magyar tongue for several weeks—a proceeding that seemed to amuse everybody excessively.

The doctor and his wife were both portly, middle-aged people with the readiest of laughs and the kindliest of faces. They had two sons at the Pest University, and two daughters at home, both of whom were engaged to be married. They were bright, good-looking girls of eighteen and nineteen, and were always busy either house-keeping or trousseau-making. In the mornings they bustled round with their heads tied up coquettishly in red silk kerchiefs and a pair of old gloves on their hands, making beds, dusting rooms, giving out things from the store-room, or 'reckoning with the cook' on her return from market, whilst their smiling, 'capacious' mother entertained me and darned the household linen. Pillow-cases, napery, pantry and kitchen cloths were all keenly scrutinised one by one, as she took them out of the laundry-basket and darned or patched accordingly, in a way that claimed my admiration, yet seemed a terrible waste of precious time. At a great sacrifice to my own feelings, I offered my assistance, which she declined jovially. 'Na! What do you take me for?' she cried. 'You did not come here to spend your time mending my linen for me!' From subsequent remarks I gleaned that she probably feared my handiwork would be too 'cobbley' for her taste: this roused rather an aggrieved feeling in my breast. I don't enjoy needlework, honestly speaking, but my efforts will compare favourably even with the frilled underlinen and delicate embroidered monograms of a well-brought-up Hungarian. I brought a pair of stockings into the salon one morning and begged for a needle and some merino mending to darn them with.

She gave me both, and watched with undisguised interest as I threaded the wool and set to work. When the holes were stopped she begged to look at them, and called her daughters in excitedly.

'Na! Look here, look here! See what the English Miss has done! That is no cobble, that is a darn and a good one too, isn't it?' Then she turned to me apologetically: 'What falsehoods people do tell, to be sure! Everybody says that Englishwomen can't sew, they are too clever for it. Besides, they have no time, what with riding and driving, tennising and golfing, cycling and reading and writing. Over and over again we have been told that Englishwomen never mend their stockings; that they go on wearing them till the holes get too big, and then they throw them away and buy new ones.'

It was my turn to laugh then, and I did it heartily, remembering the everlastingly piled-up 'stocking-baskets' of the average middle-class materfamilias all over England.

'Na! na! What is one to believe?' she said, shaking her head after I had enlightened her on this and a few other points.

'Coffee-parties' in my honour were the order of the day every afternoon. People, who knew me not from Adam, vied with each other in showing me hospitality and polite attentions. The number of store-rooms and linen-closets I was called upon to inspect were legion, and the varieties of *compote* on which my 'candid opinion' was demanded were equally numerous. The latter were all so delicious that I found no difficulty in satisfying the hearts of their concocters with unqualified praise. From morning till night 'the English Miss'

was constantly required to give her 'weighty word' upon every imaginable subject, from systems of agriculture and ideal socialism to the 'hang' of a skirt, the 'set' of a bow, and the general management of teething babies, till I began to look upon myself as a female Solomon, and to feel that he must have had rather a hard time of it, and probably much regretted his thoughtless request for wisdom when he realised all the 'strain' it entailed.

Sometimes my self-restraint was indeed sorely tried. It was too ludicrous to hear my opinions being handed on with serious gravity as something worthy of the deepest respect and consideration—words to be repeated and remembered, in fact, upon subjects of which I was palpably ignorant; for instance, the best methods for fish-drying.

If I pleaded ignorance, however, they explained their own ideas on the point, and waited for my concurrence. These views were then disseminated as the English views on that particular industry or mercantile pursuit.

It was impossible to get away from their hospitable midst in less than ten days, so that it was nearly the end of October before I started off on my return journey to Szt. Mihály. I went by rail to Magyar-Nádas, the nearest station, and the journey seemed never-ending. The trains on all the branch lines simply crawl along, stopping at every little poky station an unconscionable time. The good doctor's wife had insisted on packing me up a basket of what she called '*Mundvorrath*,' and very acceptable it proved. Cold roast chicken, white rolls, hazel-nut cakes, some slices of sausage, a few pears, a handful of walnuts, grapes, and a small bottle of wine, covered by a dainty white serviette. Our fare-

wells were of the most cordial nature, and full of gratitude on my part; but they all seemed to feel that it was I who had conferred a favour upon them. Quite a large party assembled to see me off, each bringing an offering of flowers, bonbons, candied fruits, or cakes of some kind, and waved handkerchiefs at me with tearful eyes till my train passed beyond the line of vision. By the time our dilatory engine puffed heavily into Magyar-Nádas it was already eleven o'clock at night, and before it crawled lazily on its way I was tucked safely into the sleigh sent to meet me, presenting the appearance of a bundle of fur rugs crowned by a red wool shawl. The thermometer stood below zero, and it snowed hard and fast. How soft and white those falling feathery flakes were! What a world of whiteness and mystery we were passing through! Not a sound except the jingle of the bells on the horses' necks and the crisp crunch, crunch! of the frozen snow under the rapid runners of the sleigh, that flew so swiftly and smoothly along. How delightful it was! I had a feeling that the world was empty and wide, yet filled with a delirious joy that thrilled me through and through. Empty of everything, except one solitary, flying sleigh, enveloped in circling clouds of soft, silent, snowy spirits that seemed nestling tenderly around me on every side. A mad longing that my steeds would rush into space and carry me onwards for ever and ever, in an eternal environment of fast-falling snow took possession of me, and I almost wept when we drew up at the hall door of the sleeping Kastely, and the maid Pepi came running out, exclaiming: 'Küss die Hand, gnädiges Fräulein. Was für ein schreckliches Wetter! Das arme gnädige Fräulein muss ja ganz gefroren sein.'

She was right. Our drive had lasted an hour and a half and I *was* nearly frozen, though this little fact had not dawned upon me until she mentioned it.

Winter had set in a trifle earlier than it generally does in Transylvania. Personally, I rather enjoyed this. The lake was frozen hard enough for us to skate upon it, and every afternoon the Countess and I went out for a sleigh drive, generally in the forest. Those drives were like excursions into fairy-land. How changed everything was from the day when we had been obliged to flee before a buffalo bull! The trees and grass and low bushes all looked as if the far-famed ice maiden had just passed by and turned them by a wave of her graceful wand into crystal—crystal that shone and sparkled in the bright sun, under the blue canopy of heaven, like the dazzling diamond—stalactites gleaming in the grotto at Dobsina. There were no longer herds of cattle, sheep, or pigs roaming over the snowy *pusztas*, but hares skipped about or sat up on their haunches to look at us, squirrels peeped out from the hollows of trees, the reddish brush of a fox would vanish amongst the underwood, and sometimes a wild boar would be distinctly heard grunt, grunt, grunt! as he crashed away through the bushes. One day a wild cat (the only specimen I have ever seen) grinned savagely at us from the branch of a huge oak. Another time the coachman turned to us, crying excitedly, 'Did the right honourable Countess see?'

Yes, we *had* seen; so had the poor horses. They were trembling in every limb and trying their hardest to turn. 'Let us go back,' said the Countess, and directly they got their heads towards home they went

off with the speed that terror engenders even in animals.

A big grey wolf had crossed the path a few yards in front of us, and dived into the forest beyond with a lugubrious howl. No responsive howl followed, so we knew that he was alone and therefore not dangerous; still the horses were far too frightened to proceed. Animals can scent a wolf immediately, and are more terrified at him than they are at a bear. But, as a matter of fact, wolves are only formidable when you meet them in packs. A single wolf is scarcely ever known to attack a human being, though he will carry off sheep, calves, &c. Still, it is not pleasant to meet one, even when he is alone and you are driving. Wolves are not pretty, or re-assuring, to look at. Going home along the road rather late one evening in the dusk we got near the edge of the road, one of our horses put his foot on to empty air, and toppled us gently over into a snowdrift. Of course, we were rather astonished, but not at all hurt and very much amused.

It was often terribly cold, so we always adopted the mode of the peasant women, and wrapped our heads, ears, and faces in woollen shawls. Several times an icy north-east wind blew, such as I have never felt elsewhere. We did not dare to speak out of doors then, because it seemed to freeze our tongues each time we opened our mouths. The fur rugs were made like sacks; and having put on a fur coat, you stepped into your sack and drew the folds round you tightly, sitting on them to exclude the draught. We had double windows to every room, and big stoves in which huge wood fires burnt day and night, all over the house;

yet it was sometimes difficult to keep warm when you were sitting still. The rats evidently felt it cold too, for we found them coming up from the cellars and down from the *Boden* perpetually. My life became almost a burden to me because of them. When there were none actually about, I was always expecting to see them, which was almost as bad; especially after a big fellow ran up the young Countess's legs whilst she was crossing the hall one evening. He was fortunately smitten dead by a footman as soon as he descended, but we couldn't get over it for some time. During a never-to-be-forgotten night I had a 'ratty' monster in my bedroom, and he did have such a time of it chasing the mice. You can't conceive the fearful clamour of racing feet and squealing! At last, having chased seven mice into the mousetrap, which they fondly imagined was a tower of refuge, he climbed up the curtain on to a table near the bed and began to gnaw at my candle. In vain I mewed like a cat, barked like a terrier, kicked my feet wildly about and called for help. There he stayed: gnaw, gnaw, gnaw! close beside my pillow, in the most persistent, demoniacal manner. Finally the young Countess heard my calls, lighted her candle, banged vociferously on the door first, then opened it and placed the lighted candle on the sill, whilst I collected my pillows and coverlet, and made one terrific spring over the candle into her room which opened out of mine. It was scarcely the work of an instant to pick up the candle, bang the door and shut Mr. Rat in till the morning, when Death and a terrier were sent in together. The rest of the night was spent by me wrapped in my coverlet lying on an oblong table; towards dawn I moved, forgot where I was,

tried to turn over in my sleep, and deposited myself and my pillows on the floor. On another occasion we were standing outside, enjoying the sunshine close against the house, with an umbrella to keep off the drippings. Plümp! came something over our heads, and a dark grey object rolled on to the snowy gravel. The next moment Castor had him in his mouth, and to our horror we discovered that it was a half-grown rat. He had evidently been taking an airing on the roof, but whether he lost his balance and fell, or jumped off, is more than human wisdom can divine. Probably the former. During the cold months the peasants rarely venture out of doors except to feed their animals and to go to Mass on Sundays. The latter is a meritorious action, for the churches are never heated, and the cold, vault-like feeling is intensely trying. Sheepskins of course are *de rigueur* on such occasions, and the congregation always looks as if it were only waiting to start on a sleighing expedition, everybody is so bundled up. The women discard their stiff, starched petticoats and pretty print gowns for woollen knickers and short frieze skirts very voluminously kilted, generally dark blue or black. The head-shawls are nearly all red or yellow, but widows and old women usually choose black. Peasants never wear conventional mourning for anybody at any time of the year; they find that they can sorrow equally well in red, blue, yellow, green, or any other colour, and I've no doubt they are quite right too.

The Wallachs of Transylvania, by the way, must not be confounded with the inhabitants of Wallachia or Roumania, though they are of kindred race, being the offshoots of those provinces and descendants of the



PEASANT POTTERY

old Dacians, who were of Thracian origin, which probably accounts for the graceful Greek forms of their commonest jars and pitchers. Now, however, both these branches form a distinct people, each possessing their own special physical types and characteristic individualities. The appellation 'Wallach' is supposed to be the Germanised version of the term Welsh or Wallon. This, let me observe *en passant*, is not to be taken as the term applied by us to the natives of 'gallant little Wales,' to quote a Radical phrase, because it was the general title bestowed by the all-conquering Teutons on the subjected inhabitants of the Roman Empire, whether in Britain, Gaul, or Italy. *A propos*, how the present Emperor of Germany must regret those long-past years! Had he but lived then, instead of now, what a time he might have had! Poor fellow. I cannot help feeling for him. It must be extremely trying to be born several centuries too late. Can't he get his poet-laureate to condole with him in verse, I wonder? If not, he might possibly make some arrangement to borrow ours. But to return to our Wallachs after this small digression. They call themselves *Roumans* and claim to be the direct descendants of the Roman colonists who were settled in this province by Trajan, immediately after its subjugation, and this idea is borne out by the fact that even after the lapse of sixteen centuries the costumes, cast of features, and 'local colouring' generally found amongst the Wallachs of to-day correspond almost identically with those found in the sculptured history of his campaign amongst the Dacians immortalised on Trajan's column at Rome.

To see these Wallachs at their best and their worst, you cannot do better than I did—viz. spend a week

during the spring or early summer in Hermannstadt, one of the very quaintest, funniest old mediæval towns on the face of the earth. Wherever you glance, your eyes rest on scenes that remind you irresistibly of Albert Dürer and Hans Sachs. Heavy stone archways and ponderous oaken doors lead down gloomy, mysterious passages to inner archways and more doors, which in their turn bring you out into courtyards with high wooden balconies round them, where pretty, fair-haired Saxon Juliets lean coyly down to listen to the whispered nothings so precious to them when uttered by the lips of a Romeo, whatever his nationality. From my balcony overlooking the courtyard of the hotel, where I sat during the greater part of the evening taking observations, I witnessed a good deal of very pretty love-making, heard a good deal of local gossip from the matrons knitting and chattering below, and also 'assisted' at a 'family jar' and a neighbourly squabble; all of which proved interesting and characteristic.

What a delightful, hideous, ghost-like sort of place that rambling old hotel was, to be sure!

It had (and probably still has, for it looked as if it might last for ever and ever) heavy buttresses bulging out into the street, deep-set windows, rooms in all sorts of odd corners, shaky wooden balconies, long, dim, stone passages and floors of dark oak so highly polished that you slide about on them involuntarily. I was always hoping to meet a real genuine ghost wandering about there somewhere, but alas! my usual luck deserted me, and I didn't even hear or feel one, though it was just exactly the sort of place that ought to swarm with hobgoblins of every sort and kind. The large oak

presses looked as if they were absolutely made to open mysteriously at unearthly hours and let out shadowy visitants; but they didn't. They were all fast-locked and 'chock-full' of house linen. Nevertheless I lay awake all night, more or less, and had the 'creeps' in anticipation; however, nothing came of it. Has this end of a century 'laid' even the dear dead ghosts?

Here and there brand-new buildings have sprung up amongst these grim, solid, siege-withstanding dwellings, and they look so utterly 'shoddy' and meretriciously modern by contrast, that you quite sympathise with the contemptuous expression seeming to hover over the features of their silent neighbours. 'Pshaw! who was *your* grandfather?' the ugly old houses appear to enquire sneeringly of their *parvenu* companions.

Hermannstadt prides itself on being the military capital of Transylvania. It is increasing year by year in size and importance, so I fear that it may, ere long, merge a part of its delightfully restful, old-world character in garish modernity. For the present, however, it is one of the most interesting and charming places in which to spend—well, a week at the outside. Hungary, like Spain, is a kingdom of anomalies, and this city of Hermannstadt is one of the greatest anomalies. Situated in the midst of the most Magyar portion of Magyarland, it is yet peopled by a race of Flemish colonists and Wallachs. These Flandrenses emigrated there in 1141 at the invitation of the Voivode, at a period when the fruitful lands of Transylvania had been reduced almost to a desert by the frequent incursions of devastating 'barbarians.' The Voivode promised them free grants of land if they would come over to settle there and cultivate it, and these rights were assured to

the early colonists and their descendants by a charter which constituted them a free people, governed by their own laws, framed by themselves, and in no way subject to the sovereignty of the Voivode. Through all the centuries since, they have adhered to their own political institutions and their own faith until within the last few years, when their charter was taken away by the Government with a view to Magyarising the whole nation. These Flandrenses called themselves 'Saxons,' and their province was known as 'Saxonland.' Nowadays their city and province is shared by the Wallachs, who are slowly but surely swamping the Saxons; curiously enough too, since the latter are neither thrifty nor industrious, whilst the former are both. But though they appear unable to deter the Wallachs from undermining their position, they steadily refuse either to recognise them socially or to intermarry with them. Should a Saxon desire to offer a deadly insult to any one of his own nationality, he merely remarks, in a tone of concentrated contempt: 'You're no better than a dirty Wallach!' Rage and eternal enmity are the result.

The day after my arrival, I woke to find a buxom Saxon lassie standing over my bed with a cup of delicious coffee and a crisp, golden roll on a big plate in her hand. Sitting up in bed promptly, I discussed them and the place with her. She was immensely amused because I begged her to tell me the secret of the natural rouge on her bonny cheeks. 'Ach! how gay the English Miss is! She likes to laugh!' she cried, running off with my empty cup and shaking her long plaits of flaxen hair in a half-reproving way.

Some people of a cynical turn of mind say that

women are never honest; well, I'm going to be thoroughly honest for once, at any rate, and confess



WALLACH PEASANTS

that the 'cream and roses' of the Saxon complexion often caused me to break the Tenth Commandment; and if it had been possible to steal a supply for my

personal and private use, I should certainly have broken the Eighth also.

Their figures are rather heavy, and their features a wee bit coarse; but the frankness of their big blue eyes, the abundance of their flaxen locks, and *the* complexions go a long way towards rendering them attractive specimens of womanhood; and there is one thing that they can do to perfection. Every Saxon maiden knows how to blush most becomingly, under the sheltering brim of her large coarse straw hat. Still, nothing will ever impart to them the look of race possessed by the Wallachs, almost without exception. These women are simply charming. Such delicate classic features, such smooth olive complexions and lovely dark, deep eyes!

'Oh, you darlings! came involuntarily to my lips as I watched a group of them, attired in the universal *kathrincza,* a garb of the most graceful classic description.

Looking at the delightful folds of these garments, Paris fashions and tailor-built gowns became an abomination in my sight. Imagine a white linen robe embroidered on the bodice and sleeves with scarlet and black designs in such a way as to bring out to the best advantage all the contours of the human form divine; over that a long straight piece of cloth in divers colours, fastened gracefully with large silver clasps. Doesn't it sound charming? The costume is completed by endless rows of corals round the neck, and large silver earrings of curious oriental patterns, slung round the ear and united by a silver chain hanging loose across the chest. Married women wear yards of snowy muslin folded round their heads into a sort of turban, called a *volutura*, but the girls either go quite bareheaded or twist a bright-coloured silk kerchief becomingly over their dark hair.

Having studied so many hundreds of markets and market-places in various quarters of the globe, I consider myself a connoisseur on such subjects; therefore, when I avow that the Hermannstadt market-day scene is one of the most picturesque to be found anywhere, you will understand that it must be worth seeing. There is so much variety in it, and violent contrasts are harmonised together such as you seldom find elsewhere. The groups are so eminently 'paintable' that it ought to be thronged with artists, making studies for the benefit of those less lucky individuals who have not the opportunity of seeing them *in propria persona.* The eye, sensitive to colour, is charmed not merely by the harmonious blending of the costumes worn by peasant and burgher, but also by the background of gleaming metal cathedral cupolas, by the curious form and soft grey tints of the old stone church-towers, and the neutral tints of the grim, uncompromising houses and the foreign-looking shops. Here you may find beautiful young soft-eyed madonnas by the dozen; handsome St. Johns, and burly St. Peters buying, selling, chaffering, gossiping or making love to every sort of lovely heathen god and goddess in the Greek mythology. Amongst the clusters of vegetable-women squatting on the bare brown earth amidst baskets, pitchers, hay-carts and long-horned milk-white oxen, I noted many a matron who, in her snowy *voluturas*, might have sat for an elderly Mother of Christ too. Near one of these groups passed a bevy of upper-class women, remarkably well-gowned, and wearing the daintiest of foot-gear as well as the jauntiest of hats, each one of whom shielded her face from the sun by a big fan upheld by a tiny gloved hand and a rounded arm. The contrast between them



AN ELDERLY MOTHER OF CHRIST

was striking as they paused to purchase some flowers from my virgins. By the time they had disappeared down the street at right angles with the square, I had come to the conclusion that there is *something* in Paris fashions after all. Groups of men stood about in tight-fitting white frieze garments. The Saxons and Wallachs of the male persuasion dress almost alike, although the women's costumes are so very distinctive. Whether it is that people die oftener in Hungary than elsewhere, or whether it is that they reserve most of the funerals for market days, is more than I have yet been able to decide; but certainly no weekly mart ever passes without at least one funeral procession winding across the square amidst a harsh jangling of bells; and in order to rivet on my memory more firmly a striking picture of life and death, the Hermannstadt market-day was no exception to the rule. Wending its way to the cathedral it came, no sable *cortège* such as our funerals are, but a blended mass of white and silver, flowers and lace, headed by a military band playing Chopin's pathetic 'Marche Funèbre.' Slowly, and at a distance I followed it into the cathedral, noting how all the men took off their hats as it passed, and how all the women and children crossed themselves. There is, by the way, nothing sad to my mind in a funeral, only something strange and mystical; it merely fills me with a curiosity to know something tangible about that unfathomable mystery which, for want of a better title, we call Death. When the mournful procession had gone further on its way to the cemetery, I sauntered round the ancient edifice and contemplated in the vaulted chambers, once forming the cloisters, the life-size stone portraits of the dead and gone worthies who had in days of yore held

posts of honour in the tiny republican State of Saxonland. Some of them made me laugh in spite of the fact that their stony dignity seemed to reprove all levity in every beholder. The quaintness of their costumes and the comicality of their expressions were too funny for anything. The vandal hand of the Saxon, who firmly believes that 'cleanliness is next to godliness,' has carefully white-washed all the beautiful pillars in the nave, for which piece of sacrilege I (metaphorically) used unparliamentary language. It was one of those moments, occasionally occurring in my daily life, when I hate Protestantism as fiercely as I hate Oliver Cromwell, Nero, and Napoleon.

The neighbourhood of Hermannstadt can boast of a character entirely its own. The villages round are charming, from an artistic point of view, but time did not permit me to penetrate into many of them. However, I did manage to see a little by joining a peasant family in their long ladder-like cart the next day, and driving with them as far as Hiltau, a few miles away, in order to study the old fortress-church there. In years gone by, there used to be a very large number of these battlemented edifices in Transylvania; they were almost impregnable, by reason of their elevated position and their high walls; each one had a moat, bastions, loop-holes, walls of solid masonry, and watch towers for reconnoitring purposes, also enormous oaken chests to store corn, and vaults for keeping other provisions, so that they were able at any hour to withstand a Turkish siege, if need be. A bell, still called the Turk bell, used to ring daily at noon to remind each pious worshipper to unite for a few moments in prayer for protection against the Infidel. If the Turks were known to be



FORTRESS-CHURCH AT HILTAU

approaching, a peal of bells was rung as an alarm to warn men, women, and children that it was time to rush off and take refuge within the sacred building that served them as temple and tower of safety.

What troublous times those must have been! There could have been no 'dull, dead level of monotony' for anybody then, I should imagine. The ancient corn-chests still exist, and are still kept filled with corn. Are not the Hiltau peasants a conservative race? The polite pastor, who was fetched out of his house to act *cicerone* to me, insisted on my admiring the superb crucifix standing on the table between two enormous silver-gilt candlesticks, all of them set with pearls and rubies. My words of admiration delighted his old heart, but somehow I could not help feeling that their magnificence was sadly out of keeping with the grim white-washed walls. Afterwards, he invited me in to *Jause*. Willingly accepting his frank, cordial invitation, I crossed the *Hochwürden's* threshold and delivered myself over to the tender mercies of his wife and daughter. They appeared charmed to have the society of 'an English Miss, young and merry, who speaks the very best German so prettily.' Probably most of you have already discovered that I like being petted and made much of; it seems to bring out all my best qualities in a wonderful sort of way too, so it can't be 'deleterious' to my character, as some folk would have us believe.

On taking a grateful leave of these kind people, I sauntered about the village, watching the peasants at work making straw hats, or weaving the white frieze worn by the men of both races; and amongst other

interesting scraps of conversation that fell upon my ears was the following:

'Oh, you naughty, wicked little rascal!' cried a mother, shaking a refractory urchin vigorously. 'I'll tell the Tartars or the Turks to fetch you away, that I will, if you're not a better boy!'

A yell of terror was the immediate result, followed by penitent howls: 'Oh no, no, dear little mother, don't tell them to fetch me. I *will* be good! I *will* be good!'

I smiled and wondered.

Could not even centuries of peace obliterate the memory of those terrible times of long ago? Had the child inherited an instinctive terror from his dead forefathers, some of whom might have been slain in fight? About six o'clock I drove off again in another peasant cart to Michaelsburg, a couple of miles further. This is another peasant fortress much smaller than Hiltau. At its foot nestles a tiny wooden hamlet, with tall, picturesque chimneys, high palings, and a wealth of exquisite colouring everywhere. Behind it lie the beautiful snow-capped Karpathians, bathed, when I saw them, in a flood of sunset glory, and forming a superb background to the grey stone towers, brown roofs, and dark-green belts of pine trees. Such colour effects as I saw that evening could never be surpassed! How regretfully did I get into my very 'bumpy' conveyance and turn my back upon the scene that fascinated my every sense! Still, *tempus fugit* is so true, so horribly true—in spite of its triteness—whenever you are enjoying yourself, that I was compelled to tear myself away, and go jolting back to my ghostly hotel in Hermannstadt, where I had ordered *paprikás hendl* and *Kaiserschmarn*

with apricot sauce, for half-past eight o'clock. Why is it impossible to teach an English servant to cook foreign dishes decently? This is not a conundrum, allow me to observe. The last thing my worst enemy could accuse me of under ordinary circumstances is the old-fashioned virtue of early rising, yet next morning the dawn had scarcely broken before it found me on my way to Hamelsdorf, the most interesting and truly characteristic of all the Saxon villages. Can I ever cease to remember that rattly drive? The scent of Dawn enveloping all Nature was delicious. The Goddess of Morning was in one of her most enchanting moods, and the spell she threw over my soul was potent indeed. Directly we came to a patch of meadow land I stopped my Saxon Jehu and got out to bathe my face in the sparkling dew. It was such a novel sensation. Whether it had the reputed beautifying effect is not for me to say. Nowadays prose generally follows hard on poetry, but in my case it was the poetry that followed the prose, for I had taken care to eat a substantial breakfast before starting, and so felt 'fit' for anything, from an ode to a *csárdás.* That day, alas! demolished once and for ever, what had for many years been to me a deep-seated belief, viz. that Puritanism, or, in other words, Protestantism, was a protest against the plaiting of hair and putting on of gorgeous apparel.

Tout au contraire! Arrived at Hamelsdorf, it did not require many minutes to cement an acquaintance ship with a comely woman and her buxom daughters who directly they found I could speak *Hochdeutsch* (a sign in their estimation that I must be not only a person of distinction, but all that is clever and cultivated as well), pressed me to go and honour them by partaking

of a glass of white wine and a slice of *Kug'luf*. During this repast they permitted me, at my request, to watch their long and elaborate toilets, for it was a saint's-day of some sort, and of course everybody was going to church decked out in every item of finery the family could boast. Talk of Vanity Fair and marriage markets! A church-festival in Hamelsdorf is equal to anything of the kind producible in any other part of the world. What a shabby, insignificant, prosaic sort of being they made me feel beside them, you can readily imagine! I gazed mournfully at the unadorned simplicity of my own simple blue serge whilst observing the rich colouring of gowns and ribbons, the beauty of jewelled belts, brooches, breast-clasps and necklaces donned by my companions. Naturally they begged me to accompany them to church and supplied me with a little bouquet of stephanotis. It was, I felt, a kindly effort on their part to smarten me up a bit. Inside the big, bare, white-washed edifice my attention to the Service was much disturbed by the exquisitely hand-embroidered muslin veils of the young married women and the jaunty, stiff, jampot-like velvet caps of the girls. But vanity was not confined to the feminine sex—far from it. The white frieze suits of the men were much ornamented with gilt or silver buttons, and I soon saw that everybody, without exception, carried little posies of flowers, which they kept holding to their noses continually. Seeing what was expected of me, and not wishing to transgress what was evidently the prescribed etiquette on such occasions, I also sniffed mine vigorously and ostentatiously (at the risk of a headache) to show my appreciation of the gift.

How badly I wanted to purchase one of those lovely



SAXON GIRL

belts worn by the young women no one will ever guess, but knowing them to be heirlooms, delicacy of feeling forbade me even to hint at such a desire. After Service they took me round the village and we paid several calls on their friends, so I saw many 'interiors' that interested me. Every house was scrupulously and unpicturesquely clean and neat. Huge stores of linen were the pride of each housewife's heart apparently. Stephanotis was trained round the inside of the windows in a few of the cottages, and most of them had stiff rows of painted pots with plants and flowers growing in them, ranged on the window-sills. This was too English for my jaded palate. When we got back to their own abode we found the pastor waiting (as is the custom) to offer his 'respectful salutations' to the stranger visiting his parish and to welcome me to his frugal dinner-table. It would have been ungracious to refuse—moreover the word *Mittagsessen* sounded pleasant to my ear. It's astonishing how prosaically hungry artistic emotions make you, especially when conjoined with sermons, so I reluctantly bade good-bye to my peasant acquaintances, who all shook hands with me most cordially and went off in an atmosphere of adulation, so to speak; the notes of admiration at the 'beautiful way' in which I conversed with their pastor being audible to our ears all down the street. They speak Platt-Deutsch themselves, an almost unintelligible dialect to one who is only acquainted with 'German as she is spoke' in polite society.

I found the *Herr Pfarrer* and his family pleasant, intelligent people, and spent part of the afternoon giving them graphic descriptions of what we say, do, think, feel, eat, drink, and wear in England, their naïve

curiosity upon these points being most amusing, and it was late in the afternoon before I started off to walk back to Hermannstadt, accompanied part of the way by a detachment of the village girls.

In this once ultra-exclusive 'Saxonland' the Wallachs are taking an important position, and their numbers increase so much every year that they are fast swamping the Saxon element. So firmly have they taken their place in the province that there is not only a large proportion of them amongst the Hermannstädters, but also many large and small villages inhabited exclusively by them. These are very easy to distinguish from the Saxon villages for several reasons. The houses are all built of wood instead of stone, the gables are invariably surmounted by a cross; each doorway is entered through a porch covered by a tiny sloping wooden roof, and there is a general air of picturesque disorderliness and æsthetic dirt entirely wanting in a Saxon parish. Each house stands in its own courtyard, surrounded by beautifully designed though roughly carved high wooden palings, and you may always know to which race any place belongs some time before you reach it. If it be the abode of Wallachs, wooden crucifixes and little shrines with frescoed walls will meet your eye at every few steps, not to mention saints of every size and colour; some very comical, others full of dignity, but all possessing a certain artistic value of their own to the sympathetic, discerning eye, either in design, execution or colouring. *A propos*, the churches of these two races differ quite as materially as their physique and character. The Saxon loves plenty of sunlight, plenty of white-wash,

and despises pictures or 'idols' as mere emanations from the Evil One.

The Wallach, on the contrary, prefers a dim, religious gloom, sombre-hued frescoed walls, and small lancet windows begrimed with dust that scarcely admit sufficient light to show you the dome-shaped roof above your head or the black marble pavement under your feet. Like the Greek church at Budapest they are all innocent of seats. The worshippers stand for prayer and praise, a custom that is rather trying to Western legs. Everybody of every class in Hungary is more or less superstitious, but nobody else quite comes up to the Wallach for belief in hobgoblins, vampires, witches, and supernatural horrors of most kinds. Whether they have an equally strong belief in angels and good spirits seemed to me doubtful, and, curiously enough, it is the men who are the terrified and credulous sex there. But then, the male Wallach is rather a feeble creature altogether. It is not uncommon to see him lying, with a pipe in his mouth, on the ground, basking in the sun whilst his energetic better-half is hard at work making bricks or moulding classical pottery. In fact, the perfect indifference of these lazy lords of the creation to everything except the regulation fasts of their Church, the necessary attendances at Mass, and the invention of charms to defeat the machinations of the Devil and all his angels, is something sublime. That he is pious, and a 'Bible-Christian' nobody can deny, for he has evidently taken to heart that text, 'Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Therefore take no thought, saying

What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?' and he acts upon it *literally*. God forbid that the energy and enterprise of the modern woman should ever bring about a like result in any other nation! Is it absolutely necessary that feminine industry and capabilities should engender the loss of these valuable qualities in the opposite sex? Those gentle, pretty Wallach women used to upset my temper extremely. It made me feel inclined to shake them for permitting themselves to be so down-trodden and ill-used. The Wallach husband, by the way, beats his wife periodically as a sign of the deep affection he bears her, and yet —this is the wonderful nineteenth century of sweetness and light! What a funny place the world is!

However, 'ça, ce n'est pas mon affaire!' Perhaps some of it is due to the fact that the priests, called Popas, are so intensely ignorant, they can scarcely read or write, and only repeat the prescribed ritual in a parrot fashion. Their incomes, too, are often so infinitesimal that they and their families hire themselves out as day-labourers in order to earn enough to keep body and soul together. The Saxon Hausfrau despises her Wallach neighbour because her heart is not set upon piles of linen. Rows of brightly painted plates and gracefully shaped jugs with strips of coarse embroidered linen hung between, are the great aim and ambition of her southern soul, not to mention *eikons*, as the sacred pictures produced in brilliant colours on gilt backgrounds are called. You will invariably see a hanging lamp suspended before a sort of tiny, informal family-altar too, and there are all sorts of quaint rites of a very heathenish nature and origin still in vogue amongst them. But how lovable they are, and how artistic!

If Max Nordau's theories regarding colour and degeneration are to be credited, what a very degenerate lot my poor dear Wallachs must be! Heaven help the charming sinners and save the sinful saints amongst them, and may they long be preserved from Board Schools! Not many places are now to be found in the world, I should fancy, where even a peasant woman would confidently remark, after having forced on your acceptance a lovely thing in the way of red and blue embroidered linen:

'No, no! For the love of Heaven, your Grace; not a kreutzer! Not a kreutzer! but if you must give an old woman something as a memento of your own sweet graciousness, would it be too much to ask you to send me, by the postman, just a teeny, tiny tea-shrub out of one of your big, big English tea-plantations?'

Vain were my efforts at explaining that tea-shrubs do not grow in England; she only shook her head and smiled: 'Yes, yes, your Grace, in England there are fields of sugar-cane and forests of tea; we all know that, even here; but if it troubles you to send one, think no more of my impertinent request. I am only an ignorant peasant woman after all.'

In these days of anti-marriage leagues it is dangerous to avow a sentimental belief in love marriages, still my deepest pity was awakened for the blue-eyed Saxon maidens, who are not permitted by their inexorable parents to have the least voice in the choice of their own husbands. Their father sells them to the highest bidder just as much as though they were miserable white slaves in an Eastern bazaar. Occasionally these 'arranged' matches turn out happily, because love comes to both parties after the tying of

the nuptial knot, but not always, by any means. You frequently come across a youthful wife of eighteen already separated from her equally youthful husband, sometimes by mutual consent, sometimes because she had taken the law into her own dimpled hands, and elected to follow the dictates of Nature, come what may. A Wallach baby, by the way, is the funniest, tiniest, doll-like creature extant, swathed up during its infancy in a sort of quilted cushion bound round and round with ribbons on State occasions, and things like old-fashioned knitted garters on other days.

Their language is charming to listen to, and quite easily understood by those knowing Italian. It is soft, rich and harmonious in sound, and consists largely of Latin words with a considerable admixture also of Turkish, Greek, and Slav. Almost every mountain and river in Transylvania has a Slavonic name. The most peculiar grammatical feature of the language is that the definite article is always tacked on to the end of the substantive. This singular form of construction is not found in any other Slavonic tongue except Bulgarian.

CHAPTER XI

Christmas in the Ullö-utcza—Carnival in Budapest—The 'highest circle' and the diplomatic world—A ministerial crisis—'It'—Ilka the actress again—A faithful lover—A Count and a Jewess—Emma Turolla, opera singer—The marriage question in Hungary—The fortune-teller at 'The Blue Cat'—An empress-worshipper—New Year festivities at the Royal Castle—The 'Violet Devourer'—Nature versus decency—*Une suicide manquée*—Colour versus degeneration.

It was the nineteenth of December before we finally bade good-bye to the crystal-frosted forest and the snowy hills of Transylvania, and drove off in several sledges to Kolozsvár, along roads frozen as hard as iron, but under a sky of cloudless blue. There, at nine o'clock, we took train and steamed away all through the brilliantly starlit night over the beautiful silent Alföld. The effect produced upon an imaginative, impressionable mind by the 'speaking silence' of a night-scene where miles and miles of snow fill the foreground, the middle distance, *and* the background, too, is curious and delightful. The train in which we were being whirled along snorted and groaned and shrieked, belching out its lurid breath over the pure whiteness of the quiet landscape like one of those diabolical fiery dragons, beloved of all romanciers and poets of the early ages; and, for the first time, I realised the appropriateness of the Chinaman's graphic definition of a railway train—as 'the-thousand-eyed-lightning-speed-

fire-spitting-foreign-devil.' We travelled luxuriously, having a whole saloon carriage to ourselves, furnished with sofas, easy-chairs, tables, vases of flowers, pier-glasses, and a stove, kept filled to the top with crackling logs. The sliding doors of the saloon opened on to a corridor that extended along the whole length of the train, and I spent the night in alternately taking naps on my couch till the horrid screeching of the demon-like brakes awoke me, and then promenading in the corridor bathed in the moonlit beauty of the landscape until—I felt sleepy again. The sun had just risen next morning when we arrived with much noise and fussiness at the big, bustling station in Pest, and drove off to the charming town house rented by the Count and Countess on the Andrássy-út in preference to their own gloomy family palace in an old-fashioned and duller part of the city. The Jálics-ház is comparatively speaking a small one, and therefore the more cosy and English-feeling. Directly we entered the *porte cochère* I was struck by the massive oak doorway and the vaulted roof. When our carriage drew up at the foot of the private staircase, however, I rubbed my eyes to make sure that I was not dreaming of the snowiness we had left behind us on the Alföld. But no. The plate-glass doors revealed walls, steps, and balustrades all of pure white, exquisitely sculptured stone, the coldness of which was relieved by a carpet of oriental design in the richest and most perfectly blended colours. Cursory observers will tell you that the Hungarians are a nation who love 'showiness' in every form. They are undoubtedly a nation who possess a strong feeling for colour, but they all seem to be born with an instinctive perception of the harmony

of colour—a perception, by the way, that appears to be totally lacking amongst ourselves. The terribly crude combinations that have been fashionable in England and France during the last couple of years would be impossible in Hungary. A peasant girl dons petticoats of the most vivid hues—pink, yellow, lilac, blue, or red; her bodice is often embroidered, so is her apron, and ribbons are plaited into her luxuriant hair, but, without knowing why, she instinctively chooses shades that harmonise. The carpet-weaver, the rug-maker, the artist in sheepskins, and even the potter, do just the same. Everything they 'create' is rich, warm, and brilliant in tone, yet you never come across anything, from a halfpenny plate upwards, that sets your teeth on edge, however sensitive you may be on this point. But to return to the house in the Andrássy-út. Situated in one of the finest streets of Europe, and 'replete with every modern convenience,' as the house-agents would say, it required some degree of effort on my part to remind me that I was still actually living in a 'land of barbarism.' Rooms that are delightfully warmed and perfectly ventilated though without a vestige of draught, double-windows, and well-fitting doors everywhere, luxurious carpets, inlaid cabinets, pictures, bronzes, the easiest of easy-chairs, and a general *cachet* of elegance, with a certain touch of individuality in every room, are not exactly 'barbaric' in tone. Who can wonder if I sometimes smiled to myself secretly at the notions of Hungary entertained, not only by Western Europe, but also by her near neighbours, the Viennese? Amongst other 'luxuries' (and one that is rarely found in any but *quite* modern households there) was a bath-room containing hot and cold

water. As a nation they are not addicted to too much washing of their persons; indeed, a medical man of some repute was quite horrified when I asked him, during convalescence from influenza, whether I might take a warm bath: 'But no, no!' he cried, 'what an idea! I, for my part, don't approve of baths. They are dangerous things, very dangerous things. Hot or cold, they are sure to do you harm in some way, every time you venture on one. You English must have wonderful constitutions to stand so much water. Why, from all accounts, you are constantly bathing or washing yourselves, half-a-dozen times a day. Good Heavens! What a dirty people you must be to need so much washing! Now, look at me! I haven't had a bath these four years, and the last time I was persuaded to take one I thought it would have killed me. Ah! Never again will I run such a risk! Devil take baths, say I.'

However, I determined to 'run the risk' of a bath in spite of my doctor, and lo! I am still alive to tell the tale. It was always rather a mystery to me how people managed to look so clean on such scanty ablutions. If there is anything in the trite old saying that

'Early to bed and early to rise
Makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise,'

then the Hungarians must be amongst the healthiest, wealthiest and wisest of folk. The opera and the theatres all begin at seven and are out by ten o'clock. The most fashionable of receptions is over by eleven, Court balls finish at midnight, and even the 'smartest' of dances terminates about two in the morning.

Most people drink their morning coffee or chocolate

in bed about half-past seven or eight, and the majority have done quite a day's work before 'big-breakfast' at mid-day. The fashionable resort from three to four in the afternoon is Kugler's (*the* confectioner), where 'all the world' goes to eat ices in the intervals of flirtation and munch delicious cakes to an under-current of compliments equally dainty. The Hungarians, like the Spaniards, have a talent for making pretty speeches, and (though I wear knickers and write books) I am still sufficiently feminine to appreciate sweets—of all kinds.

Christmas is perhaps the greatest festival of the whole year in Hungary. Neither the Romanists, the Greeks, nor the Protestants decorate their churches, but the services in all of them are gorgeous and impressive in their ceremonial. There is no holly or mistletoe to be seen in the houses either, but every household, however poor, has a Christmas-tree of some sort. Occasionally it only consists of a single small branch of fir stuck into a rough cross of wood and decorated with a few tiny tapers and a handful of cut tissue-paper. In every well-to-do household it is a big affair and the 'Christ-Child' never forgets anybody. We were all invited to spend Christmas Eve and dine the next day with the dear old Countess R——, who occupied her grimy, rambling old mansion in the Ullö-utcza. Its exterior ugliness was, however, in a great measure compensated for by the spaciousness and comfort of the interior. Being the head of the family and most hospitably inclined, her house was always full of grand-children, nieces, nephews, cousins, and dependents of various grades. The long table in her dining-room was constantly full, for directly one batch left, another arrived to fill their

places. During the winter we were frequently there, and generally found a party of fifteen or twenty to dinner, several of whom were 'poor relations,' either partly or completely dependent on her bounty. Amongst these I well remember a young hunch-backed Count, the scion of a penniless house, who had cast aside the aristocratic traditions of his family and come to Pest to earn his daily bread. Without professional training of any kind and handicapped from his birth, he naturally found this a hard struggle, and had it not been for the hospitality extended to him, year after year, by the old Countess, he would never have been able to prosecute the studies that later on enabled him to make a livelihood. Cases of this sort of unlimited generosity are not at all rare amongst a nation where people unostentatiously practise in their every-day life all the ancient patriarchal virtues that this end-of-a-century affects to despise as mere relics of the Dark Ages. Christmas Eve saw us all assembled in the larger of the two salons, gazing with amused excitement at the mysteriously closed doors of the inner room, which were presently thrown open with a tremendous flourish. The blaze of light inside was quite dazzling. An enormous fir-tree stood on a round table in the centre, covered with hundreds of lighted wax-tapers and all the usual glitter and flitter of Christmas-trees. Round the room stood small tables on which lay piles of packages addressed to each person. Though I was 'a stranger and foreigner' amongst them, nobody had forgotten me—a fact that I was not slow to recognise and appreciate. Had the positions been reversed, would the results have been similar? was a thought that crossed my mind, and I am bound to admit that I doubted it. We English are

a race possessing many excellent qualities moral and physical, but tact and consideration towards foreigners can scarcely be considered strong points in our national character. After mutual thanks and congratulations had been exchanged, we were marshalled in to a banquet-like supper, where merry toasts and clinking glasses detained us till nearly ten o'clock, when we withdrew *en masse* to the smoking-room to sip black coffee and liqueurs, smoke cigarettes and laugh at good stories; but midnight found us all comfortably tucked into 'our little beds' and sleeping the sleep of the righteous. It was a delightful specimen of a genuine Hungarian family-gathering. You could not help feeling, too, that the good wishes bandied about were neither empty phrases nor conventional hypocrisies.

This second winter in Budapest showed me rather a different side of the social life to that in which I had mingled before. Then, I had been outside the pale of society; now, I was inside its most sacred precincts. That makes a vast difference in the point of view—politically, socially, and morally. During the previous winter my dwelling had been in the camp of the Opposition, now I found myself amongst the Ministerial party. The Premier belonged, so to speak, to our clan, being a near blood-relation of the Countess. The struggle for the Civil Marriage Bill was going on, which meant a big 'gathering of the clans' for the important divisions. At various places and on various occasions I had, therefore, the opportunity of meeting all the leading Members of Parliament, besides most of the Cabinet Ministers and many of the Court officials, several of whom were related to the Count or Countess by close ties of blood and marriage, consequently I heard 'the other side' of

everything in the way of politics. This was most interesting, especially as I endeavoured to remain quite neutral and to watch impartially 'the game of governing,' a game that gives you a splendid opportunity of studying human nature, I must admit, though it is apt to breed cynicism in the one who *only* looks on at it. Sometimes, however, my attitude of impartiality broke down and I found myself, as usual, taking sides, for the time being. To a girl of my temperament there is a certain fascination in feeling herself 'in the thick' of a struggling, palpitating life. It was pleasantly exciting to feel a sort of personal concern in every great debate, To smile at the 'leaders' in the daily papers and wonder whether some of them were 'inspired' by ignorance, or interest.

A curious phase of the human mind, but one that is common alike to men and women in every part of the world, is the keen enjoyment produced by a sense of superiority in any form. How virtuous and superior you feel when, dashing through a station in an express train, you smile half contemptuously at the good folk who are patiently waiting on the platform there for the ordinary train! How much more satisfaction, then, do we gain from a knowledge that we are amongst the favoured few who have been permitted to mingle in the forceful flow of the political undercurrent and to obtain a fairly accurate estimate of the course it really intends to take, the *débris* it is sure to carry down with it, the barriers it will probably find in its way and the likelihood of their being strong enough to resist it, or fragile enough to go down with the first flow of the tide.

À propos of newspapers, I must not forget to describe the solitary specimen of the genus 'it' that I have ever

had the opportunity of meeting. Fortunately they are rare! 'It' was a countess by birth, a journalist by profession, and an anomaly by nature. That in itself says nothing though, nowadays. Born a girl, she had been brought up by an eccentric mother on the most extraordinary principles. The Countess *mère* brought into the world two children, a son and a daughter, but after studying their respective characters during babyhood, she came to the conclusion that Providence had bungled and made a mistake in the sex. Being a woman of energy and determination, she decided to rectify this error to the best of her ability, so her daughter, provided with boy's attire, was given into the hands of tutors to be brought up on strictly masculine principles; her son, on the contrary, was put into frocks, wore long curls, and was brought up by governesses in the most select and ladylike manner. Years passed, and both of them grew to maturity; then the young man rebelled, borrowed some of his sister's clothes and hoisted the standard of independence. He objected to abnormalities apparently, and I don't blame him either. Not so the girl. Having been once emancipated from femininity, she determined to retain both her masculine privileges and her masculine attire. Therefore, she abjured her sex, changed her name from Sarolta to Karol (*i.e.* from Charlotte to Charles) and took to journalism as a means of livelihood. To-day she is a shining light amongst the members of the Press Club of Budapest, where no one ever thinks of regarding her as anything other than a comrade. That is why, to my mind, 'It' seems the only pronoun appropriate to the case. In spite of her professional success and her independence of character and position, I could not help pitying poor 'Karol.' She has lost so

much and gained so little apparently, for 'It' is not handsome and has no particular fascination either for men or women. Petticoats would give dignity to *its* stumpy proportions, and a few tiny curls would soften the hard contours of *its* face wonderfully; *it* might even be passably good-looking in a dainty toque, I fancy; but of course *it* scorns all such notions, doesn't care a rap for beauty, and centres *its* ambitions on good cigars and plenty of loose cash. Love is necessarily a folly that *it* fails either to understand or to appreciate, and terriers are the only creatures for which *it* is capable of feeling any sort of affection.

I was much interested in *it*—from a psychological point of view; and whenever *it* dies, I sincerely hope that some person or persons of a thoughtful, scientific turn of mind will come forward and carefully preserve *it* in spirits of wine, as an extraordinary specimen, for the edification of future generations of men and women.

I was destined that year to see and hear a great deal of Ilka P. (an actress who played in 'Hansel and Gretel' last season, and is now singing in the Grand Duke). In fact she was quite ubiquitous; you couldn't get away from her. She was *the* star at the Folks-theatre and charmed certain tastes in the male world by her appearance on the stage in flesh-coloured tights and a knot of ribbons. She had evidently heard of the French phrase, 'de l'audace, et de l'audace et toujours de l'audace,' and it had apparently wakened a kindred chord in her own soul. Day by day her fame waxed. She became the possessor of houses, carriages, diamonds, and—reputations. Her *trousseaux* were frequently on view in one or other of the great *lingerie* establishments

but the *ci-devant fiancés* were always ruined, dead, or out of favour before the wedding-day arrived.

You were constantly meeting her too, riding, driving or walking in the most 'chic' of costumes. Just at that period she was one of the staple topics of conversation, for there was generally something fresh to tell about her; her newest witticism, her newest extravagance, her newest amour. To me she presented herself both as a problem in ethics and a study in psychology. It interested me intensely to hear that she never failed to repair to High Mass, armed with a big velvet prayer-book, every Sunday and saint's day, also that she gave liberally to charities; that neither friend nor foe ever appealed to her in vain for aid; that she kept a French lady-companion to play propriety; did a good deal of betting, had a partiality for taking champagne baths surrounded by a circle of admirers; did not know the meaning of professional jealousy, and had registered a vow 'to die a countess.' Despite this psychological interest, however, she ended by 'boring' me so that when she finally betook herself and her varied talents to the Carl Theatre at Vienna, it was rather a relief to most of us. Doubtless she has many compeers in London, but London is too big to admit of such close observation as at Budapest.

Curiously enough, it was amongst these self-same aristocratic circles that I came across several striking examples of the abstract noun fidelity, a quality that has become out of date in this *fin de siècle* age. A nobleman of high rank and ancient lineage loved a maiden fair, equally high-born, but she refused him in favour of his younger brother. Eleven years went by; his mother died, his brother was childless, there was no

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heir to the enormous properties, and he still remained a bachelor. 'Sándor,' said my Lord, his father, 'we *must* have an heir, so one of us must marry; which is it to be, you or I, my son? Come, now, let me prevail upon you to choose a wife and give me a grandchild in my old age.'

But he steadily refused, so the old gentleman took to himself a young wife, and two children were the result of his union. Then he died; soon after the younger brother also died, and the Countess Clarisse became a widow. After a decent interval of mourning the faithful lover again laid his heart and hand at the feet of the still fascinating widow, who rewarded his fidelity as it deserved, and the marriage has proved a huge success. Having, however, no children of their own, they have adopted the little son and daughter left orphans by the untimely death of the old Count's second wife, and are 'living happy ever after,' as the fairy tales put it, like a pair of married lovers. One night at the theatre a pale, golden-haired woman with a Madonna-like face was pointed out to me as the heroine of a very tragic story. Her parents, Jews, and enormously wealthy, were imbued with an ardent desire to marry their daughters to noblemen. The elder girl had been already successfully disposed of (at a high price, of course), and at last a suitable *parti* presented himself for Ilona, in the person of an impoverished Count who had a taste for dissipation. The girl, it was said, had a penchant for another man and had even gone through the ceremony of a private marriage with him; still, in spite of this, she allowed herself to be married with great pomp to the Count Batthányi. The other man, however, also a Jew, named Rosenberg, young, good-

looking, and very much in love either with Ilona or her fortune, went to the Count beforehand and dared him to steal his bride; but her father, who laughed at Rosenberg's pretensions, assured him that these words were mere threats. Immediately after the marriage the young couple travelled away to spend the honeymoon in Italy. At Venice the seconds of Rosenberg came up with them, delivered a challenge *à outrance* to the bridegroom and requested him to return at once to Budapest and fight it out. Leaving the bride behind he started off, and she never saw him alive again. The Count fell at the first shot with a bullet through his heart. So the week-old bride became a widow, who, on the day of the funeral, fell into hysterics over her husband's coffin, and shrieked out that for her life was finished. Twelve months later, however, she entered into wedlock with a third man and appeared to have wiped from her mind for ever the tragic occurrences of those months that had brought death and imprisonment, respectively, to each of the men who claimed her; but her innocent, Madonna-like beauty has not been dimmed, nor has her silvery laugh lost a single tone of its thrilling ripple, they told me.

The laws against duelling in Hungary are not very strict, and a good deal of it goes on *sub rosa*. If you wing your man, it is easy enough to call it an accident (for the benefit of the journalists), but if you kill your adversary you must expect to pay a fine and undergo at least a year's State imprisonment, which means incarceration in the fortress, but not in a cell. You have a room comfortably furnished, good food, wine, books, &c., and your friends may visit you at any time almost and stroll about with you on the ramparts. Taking

into consideration the circumstances of this case, the Emperor commuted Rosenberg's sentence into three months' imprisonment only, and immediately after his liberation he soothed his lacerated feelings by a *liaison* with Signorina Turolla, the *spirituelle* prima donna at the Opera-house.

> 'Love for a year, a week or a day,
> But alas! for the love that loves alway!'

runs the refrain of a once-popular song. Emma Turolla was not a Jewess, neither had she a Madonna face; she was only gifted with a magnificent voice, a magnetic soul, a woman's heart, and all the poetry and passion of a southern nature. Their love-dream was sweet to her, and wishing to perpetuate it she proposed that they should marry. He laughed contemptuously at the idea. As *artiste* he adored her, but—that was all. She was furious, heart-broken, humiliated, to know that as woman she was nothing to him; she declared she would never sing another note, left the stage, and turned to religion for consolation. Now she sings only in the choir of a bare Russian convent where she is undergoing her noviciate. The mere sound of the word Russia used to make her shudder with cold. To spend the rest of her life there is part of the penance she has imposed upon herself. *La poverina!* And all for the sake of a man! If you asked me the most powerful factor in the world, I should say love—even in the prosaic nineteenth century.

There is a striking difference, however, between the way that the Hungarians look at love and the way we English people do. Now in Hungary, marriage very seldom degenerates into the humdrum affair it so often

becomes in England, for this reason. A man who marries an attractive woman (and the majority of them are attractive, even when they lack actual beauty) does so knowing that it is a case of himself against the world. He has no *harem* in which he can imprison his wife, and he is not so unreasonable as to expect that she will continue to lavish her affections on him unless he distinctly shows her that he appreciates her above all other women; therefore, if he wishes to retain her love, he must make himself more charming to her than any other man. Then, on the other hand, a wife who wishes to retain her husband's heart as well as his name comprehends that she must make herself his companion and friend as well as his wife and the mother of his children. This is why you find there old married folk who are just like wedded lovers quite as often as wedded couples who are absolutely nothing to each other. There is no middle course possible. Magyar nature and Magyar society are both against the prosaic monotony of mere conventional respectability.

Woman *as* woman is loved, honoured, and obeyed in Hungary to an extent that is perhaps scarcely realised even by the Hungarians themselves.

This is probably the reason why children are looked upon as something very charming and very precious to their parents; also why fathers are not ashamed to confess that they are quite as devoted to the babies as the mothers are. In England I have often heard a father say he never takes any notice of his children until they can walk and talk. That is the sort of man who earns my heartiest detestation. In Hungary, from the highest to the lowest class, you will find a father vitally

interested in each child from the moment of its birth. But of course in a country where people's affections are so much warmer than ours, there is naturally a much greater display of jealousy—jealousy of so passionate a kind that it often leads to most tragic consequences, and is sometimes found to be quite what Goethe so epigrammatically describes:

'Die Eifersucht ist eine Leidenschaft
Die, mit Eifer sucht, was Leiden schafft.'

Speaking of children reminds me of a mother in Budapest. They are a very wealthy family, belonging to the old nobility, and she is the mother of two sons and two daughters. She married at fifteen, and though she now has grown-up children, she is still young, comely, and a Society belle of the dark, magnificent, southern type that is not purely Magyar. Her eldest son became deeply enamoured of a little dancer at the Opera House, upon whom he lavished more than he possessed by a long way. It came to the ears of his people that he also intended to perpetuate his folly by marrying her, and consternation reigned in the family. But his mother was a woman of expedients. Elemir must be saved, and she would save him. Now there is in Budapest a certain place of amusement, not particularly refined nor particularly reputable, but much frequented by the *jeunesse dorée* of the metropolis. It is called 'The Blue Cat.' A few evenings later there appeared at 'The Blue Cat' a very handsome gipsy woman, picturesquely attired, who sat in a dim corner beside a table covered with cabalistic signs, and told fortunes. She was able not only to predict the future, but also to reveal the past in such a wonderful manner that she

created quite a *furore* amongst the *habitués*. Presently Elemir approached her to ask his fate. She gazed at him solemnly beneath the red silk turban-like head-dress that shaded all the upper part of her face, then she remarked in hollow, dreamy tones: 'Young man, beware! I see a dark, dark shadow hanging over the horizon of your life. You are standing on the edge of a precipice—you are contemplating a step that will mean for you moral and social suicide. A demon in the guise of a woman is pushing you nearer and nearer to the abyss—in a moment you will have perished! I can see no more—yet.' She paused with fixed gaze, and then went on as though she were describing some scene being enacted before her eyes: 'You are falling!—no, no!—you are saved! You have thrust her away from you—you have gone on a long journey into a land of palms and roses, of sunshine and blue skies, where a golden-haired beauty is waiting for you. You will love her, she will become your wife. You will rise in your career. You are a diplomatist, but a very insignificant one now; by-and-by you will be a great one—you will be a power in the land—you will be happy in love as in war. That is all. Shall I tell you your past now?'

'Yes, yes, certainly. But if you don't tell it correctly, even down to the smallest details, I shall not believe a word as to the future.'

'Good. I will begin at the beginning.'

She began at the day of his birth, and gave him a condensed account of his whole life, his home, and even the arrangement of his rooms.

It was marvellous! Elemir absolutely gasped. Was this gipsy woman a witch? It was just as his friends had told him. Their past lives seemed like an open

book before her. It was absolutely uncanny. And since she could read the past so accurately, why no the future also? he mused on his homeward way. He would consult her again the next day, put her knowledge still further to the test by questions as to further details, he thought as he closed his eyes in slumber; but the next night 'The Blue Cat' had resumed its normal character. The gipsy fortune-teller was no longer there; she had disappeared with the same mystery as she had come. Nobody knew her name, nor where she had come from, nor where she had gone to. Curiously enough, Elemir omitted to tell his people anything about this mysterious person, but shortly afterwards he relieved their minds by applying for leave of absence to spend the rest of the winter in Italy, and his *penchant* for the pretty *ballerina* died a natural death.

This same Elemir has two sisters, both of whom are pretty, graceful, and cultured. The younger has but one desire in life, it is to shine in Society. The elder, also, has but one ambition, for the sake of which she has refused several excellent offers of marriage. She is a devout worshipper of the Empress, and offers up daily petitions to her patron saint that he may use his influence in getting her promoted to the post of a Maid of Honour at Court. Her room is hung with photographs of the Imperial lady, and she always sleeps with one under the pillow and another hanging round her neck in a locket. Each time she goes to a Court ball is marked as an epoch in her life, and the night she was first presented to her Majesty is marked as *the* red-letter day of her existence.

On the first day of January 'A happy New Year to you!' is the cordial greeting on everybody's lips, from

the porters and errand boys (who bring you cards for which they expect a pecuniary reward) to the *Corps diplomatique* and the whole Court. There is always a 'function' at the royal castle, even when the King and Queen are not able to be present. They usually spend Christmas and the New Year alternately at Budapest and Vienna. If the Queen does not see fit to attend these functions she is generally represented either by the Crown-Princess Stephanie or the Archduchess Maria Theresa, but the alternate years, when the Court is in Vienna, both the King and Queen are represented by some one chosen from amongst the great nobles, and of course this honour is much sought after and greatly appreciated. On this particular occasion the popular Count and Countess (who had entertained me in the Karpathians) had received this honour for the third time, much to the chagrin of the Master of Ceremonies and the Mistress of the Robes. My friend, the young Countess, was in a great fluster of excitement over it.

'Only think! How delightful it must be!' she exclaimed over and over again, between the hours of eight and twelve on New Year's Eve. 'They are just like royal sovereigns. They drive up in Court equipages, alight at the royal entrance, where all the sentries and guards present arms to them, and then they sweep through the ante-rooms full of bowing grandees, and surrounded by a whole suite of Court dignitaries, up to the royal daïs, where everybody goes one by one to offer congratulatory speeches as though they were really the King and Queen. Oh! I'd give anything to be in Aunt Katinka's place for those few hours; wouldn't you? I should like to paraphrase the Neapolitan proverb, "See Naples and die" into "Be a Queen for once

on some great occasion and then die." You can't imagine how I long to taste sovereign power! It's a real misfortune for a girl of my calibre to be the direct descendant of a ruling race that has outlived its sovereignty, I can assure you!'

'Why don't you marry the heir apparent, then, if you are so anxious to be a queen?' I asked. 'Have you forgotten the message sent to your mother by the Emperor, who noticed you at the birthday-ball of the Archduchess Valerie?'

She laughed and blushed: 'Well, what of that?' 'Only that he said: "Go to the Countess with my compliments and tell her that she has a daughter worthy of herself, for she is certainly the most beautiful girl in the whole room." Beauty, wealth and wit ought to go a long way towards making a woman a queen, in my humble opinion. Indeed, my dearest little ambitious one, you *are* a queen already, if you only realised the fact; so am I, and so is any and every woman who recognises the value of her prerogatives, and takes the trouble to exercise them. Don't be a little goose! Life is too short to waste it in longings after "lost sovereignty," or anything of that kind. *Take* your power and *reign*. Will yourself to be a queen, and you will *be* one. "Them's my sentiments!" as Sam Weller remarks.'

'Oh, it's all very well for *you* to talk like that, because you don't understand how it feels to long for a kingdom. I should like to lead an army to victory as one of my ancestresses did! I want to have a nation at my feet appealing to me for redress of grievances, worshipping me for having given them freedom, peace, and prosperity! I want to be a power in the land, not just a

mere woman! Thank God, my dear girl, that you were not born with all the instincts of a ruler yet without any kingdom to rule. It's not pleasant, I assure you.'

'But you are not simply "a mere woman." On the contrary, you are a "boy-girl," and therefore succeed, according to the laws of the land, not only to the title and property of your father, but also to *all* his rights civil and political. That is an advantage you Hungarian women have over us Englishwomen. That alone makes you a power in the land, since you have the rights and privileges of a man combined with the potency of feminine charm and all the other ruling attributes of a "mere woman."'

However, my efforts at consolation fell flat. Her charming young ladyship continued to sigh for queendom the whole evening through, rather to my amusement. However, this same would-be sovereign voluntarily relinquished a town-house and social triumphs shortly afterwards in favour of a *mariage d'amour*, and a quiet life in the dullest of country-places.

The Hungarians, like the French, are great at conversation, but the freedom of speech indulged in by both sexes rather embarrasses a foreigner at first. Still, on reflection, I came to the conclusion that there is more indecency about the conventionalities of so-called propriety than there is in the frankness of a people who recognise nothing shocking or indelicate in human-nature, except viciousness, and who fail to see a virtue in reticence or reserve of any kind. Having once got over this bread-and-butter-miss prudery, I have come to understand that innocence and ignorance are not synonymous terms, and that our national motto, 'Honi

soit qui mal y pense,' is a great and ever-recurring truth in the daily life of men and women everywhere.

The season in Budapest is called the Carnival. It begins on January 6, and ends on Shrove Tuesday with the All-Fools'-Ball already mentioned. Some enterprising spirits tried to introduce into Hungary Italian gaieties, also a Battle of Flowers was organised on the Andrássy-út; but it was scarcely a success for anybody —except the flower-shops—so it was not repeated. That sort of thing requires an abundance of bloom and sunshine to make the game really worth the candle. *A propos* of flowers, I remember seeing a very amusing play at the National Theatre, called 'The Violet-devourer.' It was, I fancy, an adaptation from one of Scribe's comedies. The hero of it half-ruined himself by constantly sending huge bouquets of violets to all the women of his acquaintance, and when he did at last fall desperately in love with a girl whom he wanted to marry, the bouquet intended for her, and tied with a white ribbon having the English sentence, 'I love you,' in silver lettering on it, reached the hands of the wrong person. Then everything and everybody got terribly 'mixed,' and all sorts of laughable complications ensued. Whenever an English character was introduced on the stage, I used to feel by turns amused and indignant. As a nation they respect and admire us, as individuals they love us, but on the stage they merely turn us into ridicule. We are always represented tall, red-haired, long-nosed, slow of speech and angular alike in mind and manners. Men are invariably clothed in 'very loud' check suits, have a field-glass slung over their shoulders and carry a regular 'Gamp' umbrella. Women are always attired in terrible hats with blue veils, and wear

blue spectacles ; their skirts are extremely scanty, their feet abnormally big, and their foot-gear of the ugliest description. Whenever a man proposes to a girl, she shakes hands in token of acceptance, but scathes him with scientific phrases by way of refusal. Many a time in the National Theatre at Budapest did the well-known lines of Robert Burns flash through my mind :

> 'O wad some power the giftie gie us
> To see oursels as ithers see us !
> It wad frae mony a blunder free us
> In gait and notion.'

The *rôle* of an Englishwoman in any play there, is generally apportioned to a talented actress whose statuesque Madonna-like appearance is eminently suited to such characters as she is generally called upon to assume ; but I have also seen her play Titania in the 'Midsummer Night's Dream,' and she told me (when I met her at one of those delightfully interesting receptions, held from time to time in the *foyer* of the Opera House by the Count and Countess D——) that she thoroughly appreciated the sparkling fun of that most charming of Shakespearian fairy-tales. As a rule she played the prudish, pious, and highly moral parts. Her portrayal of a young English girl was considered perfect —according to the traditions of the Hungarian stage. Emilia, who was well-born, well-bred, young and charming, became the wife of a worthy professor—a don at the University, and lived an altogether stainless life, till a man crossed her path with whom, for the first time, she fell in love. Then, she threw prudence and virtue to the winds, like many another woman before her. He was a 'beauty-man,' an M.P., the editor of an important Radical newspaper, a spendthrift, and a

viveur of the most heartless kind. His was not the nature to love anybody, except himself; yet, such is the perversity of human nature, that poor girl! she trusted him, and of course he proved faithless to her, as he had done to a dozen others before her. She took it to heart in a way that is eminently foolish but extremely human. One evening some passers-by saw her walking into the Danube and hauled her out half-dead. An attack of brain fever, aggravated by pneumonia, nearly finished what was left of her, but after a long and dangerous illness she recovered, resumed her position at the National Theatre, and continues to play pious parts, looking more Madonna-like than ever. Is there anything sadder in life, I wonder, than *une suicide manquée*? Yet, why does one always see it in a serio-comic light?

CHAPTER XII

The Salon-Palmay and her authentic record—Anglo-maniacs and Franco-maniacs—Maurus Jokai, novelist—Woman's position in Hungary—The Kossuth episode and the fall of a Cabinet—The German language versus the Magyar tongue—The Hungarian peasant and the '48 Revolution.

IN his book 'On Degeneration,' Max Nordau opines that the great attention paid at this end-of-a-century to colour is a certain sign of the depravity of the age. That may, or may not be; nothing would induce me to discuss the subject from a scientific point of view. My theory is, that inordinate self-esteem and a love of notoriety are at the bottom of the degeneration exhibited by individuals of both sexes; but, looking back impartially on the last fifty or sixty generations as depicted in the historical and literary remains of the last few centuries, I must honestly confess that I fail to see where the degeneration comes in. This may be my misfortune of course, but it can scarcely be looked upon as my fault, since I have conscientiously studied existing records, and have been forced by their revelations to conclude that, taking the world generally, we are more refined, more cultured, more thoughtful, more virtuous, more benevolent and more altogether-estimable than any of the generations that have preceded us, since the world was young; besides, it appears to me that every age has its own particular Max Nordau. King Solomon is one

of the most eminent examples, and he ought to know, if there is any truth at all in the Latin adage : *Experientia docet.* Are degeneration and pessimism synonymous terms, I wonder? *Qui sait?* If Alexander the Great had been a nineteenth-century Society woman, how would he have developed himself? Now this is a problem that a young Society woman in Budapest set herself to solve in her own person. She was neither pretty, nor cultured, nor witty, but she possessed what school-boys denominate as 'any amount of cheek,' and her whole soul was filled by an ardent desire to reign—in the hearts of men. But how? 'There's the rub,' she thought to herself as she glanced around on the beauty, the grace, the charm of her social compeers. She must oust them from their place somehow; but how? Then an idea struck her. She announced herself to her husband and the world as the Society-Palmay. Henceforth her great ambition in life was to emulate the vices, the virtues, the eccentricities of manner and costume of the actress who had reigned as first favourite at the Folks-theatre. Her object was achieved. She had gained notoriety and she reigned in the hearts of *men,* though women avoided her. She degenerated rapidly, and was soon enabled to boast that she had always eleven strings to her bow (or beaux to her string, if this version is preferable) who were provided with eleven latch-keys, she herself retaining the twelfth. She was not by any means a Socialist—*tout au contraire!*—but she was an ardent supporter of what (I am told) is a Socialist doctrine—viz. the doctrine that leaves a woman free to change her admirers as often and as unceremoniously as she changes her bonnet. In the following autumn she followed the example of her great model, Ilka Palmay,

by eloping with a young land-owner (who married her directly the divorce decree became absolute) and settling down with him on his estate in the country. The actress, who had by that time also reached the goal of her ambition, having induced a very youthful Count into matrimony, had likewise retired into private life for a short period only. Just at present both these ladies are, I believe, playing the parts of virtuous wife and dignified châtelaine, after sowing luxuriant crops of wild oats.

It would be interesting from a psychological point of view to know how man, in the aggregate, sees this type of woman. He says that he despises her, but his contemptuous words are often belied by his actual conduct towards her. Does he ever realise, I wonder, that for one such woman in the world, there are often a dozen such men; who, by the way, are *not* cut by Society. Justice is often represented with a bandage over the eyes. This strikes me as being appropriate.

Amongst the highest circles in Magyarland the sexes divide themselves almost exclusively into Anglo-maniacs and Franco-maniacs. A child is provided from its infancy with a French nurse, and often learns to speak that language before it can talk its own tongue—a good idea in some ways, since by this means it acquires a perfect French accent. The girl grows up into a *grande dame*, on whose horizon Paris looms as the metropolis of the whole world. She affects Parisian manners, wears Parisian fashions, reads Parisian literature, talks Parisian French, but does not marry *à la mode de Paris*. A marriage of convenience is a rarity amongst the upper classes in Hungary. A young 'scion of the nobility,' on the contrary, becomes an Anglo-maniac. His coats are 'built' by Poole, his boots, his

hats, his guns, his saddles, his dogs, his linen, must all be got from London—all, that is to say, except his cigarettes. They come from Egypt or Russia, and he grows his own wine.

Nevertheless, there is an immense amount of patriotic feeling amongst the Hungarians of both sexes and of all classes, in spite of the fact that Austria after the 1848 revolution did her utmost to stifle and destroy all nationality in the Magyar people. That they did not succeed in doing so is, perhaps, a good deal due to the fact that during those dark years of woe and oppression, the greatest of Hungarian novelists, Maurus Jokai, made it his mission in life to stir up and foster into flame the dying embers of patriotism amongst his countrymen, by writing a series of magnificent historical novels. During this winter I had the pleasure of making his acquaintance, and though he is getting very near to the biblical period allotted to man, he has certainly not outlived the charm of personality for which, in his more youthful days, he was famous. For several years he was the intimate friend and associate of Hungary's greatest lyrist, Sándor Petöfy, and his career has been a chequered one. Sentenced to death by the Austrians, after the surrender at Világos, he fled into hiding until his young wife, the famous tragic actress, Rozsa Láborfalva, was enabled to obtain an amnesty for him, when he returned to Budapest penniless and almost in despair. The revolution had cost him a good deal. He had lost not only his position, his means of livelihood, and his hopes for his country's freedom, but also every hair of his head. Since then he has always patronised wigs, and makes no secret of the fact. He is one of the most

prolific writers of the age, and his talents are of the most versatile character. The majority of his works are historical, but he is equally good as a humorist, whilst his descriptions of Hungarian life and scenery are as graphic as descriptions from the pen of Charles Dickens; moreover he is a dramatist and a lyrical poet, and has also devoted himself, in a certain degree, to scientific subjects. For several years past he has taken his place as a politician—this time, however, on the side of the Government; for the Emperor Franz Joseph has known how to endear himself even to his Magyar subjects. Time has taught the two portions of the dual monarchy to trust each other. But, notwithstanding his bald head, Maurus Jokai may certainly esteem himself favoured of the gods. His genius has brought him not alone fame and wealth, but honour, gratitude, and the love of his compatriots. To how many others does genius bring nothing but poverty, humiliation, and death! There are very few men, either in this century or any other, who can boast of a jubilee such as was prepared by the Hungarian nation, a couple of years ago, for their veteran novelist, whose sole regret on that occasion must have been that the courageous wife whose devotion to her husband is so well known, should not have been spared to share with him this triumph. His latest novel, 'Eyes like the Sea,' is a tribute to her memory. Unfortunately he has no son to inherit the genius of his parents. Some of his best-known novels have been translated into English by Mr. Bain, Mr. Louis Felbermann and others. Like most of his countrymen, Maurus Jokai has a very high opinion of the feminine portion of humanity. In his eyes woman is a being

full of charm; the crowning glory of creation, endowed with the highest qualities, moral and mental, and able to take any position in life that fate thrusts upon her, from leading an army to soothing a baby; from ruling a county to ruling a hospital; from managing an estate to managing a household. The only thing that has not yet 'caught on' amongst women in Hungary is cycling, and if you knew the condition of many of the roads, this would not surprise you. During times of peace and times of war they have shown courage, promptitude of action, and readiness of resource, individually and collectively, yet the possession of these qualities has neither 'destroyed their womanliness' nor 'lessened the respect of the masculine sex' towards them. Quite the contrary. In fact, except that a *young* woman, whether married or unmarried, is supposed to require a certain amount of chaperonage, the Hungarian women can give us points and beat us on our own ground (however 'modern' we may be) socially, morally, *and legally* too. Maurus Jokai is a delightful conversationalist. His reminiscences of long ago are intensely interesting. He has helped to *make* history, literally as well as figuratively. The name and fame of Lajos Kossuth is not forgotten even amongst Westerners, though we, who are of this generation, know little or nothing about him beyond the fact that he died in Italy a couple of years ago, and was carried back to be buried with great pomp in his native land, whence he had been exiled nearly fifty years previously. Well, he had been one of Jokai's intimate friends. They were fellow-revolutionists together; but whilst one looked upon himself as 'the Napoleon of Hungary,' the other was content to become merely a Walter Scott, whose

quiet and unobtrusive influence might permeate the nation without arousing censure. Of course it is almost impossible for a stranger to form a correct estimate of any foreign political leader without bestowing a good deal of close study on the subject, especially when the opinions of his own countrymen are so widely divergent as those of the Hungarians on Kossuth's career. Still, if 'the one who looks on' may be permitted to form an opinion upon the opinions of the majority of those with whom she has been brought into contact, I should say that the severe verdict passed upon him in 1854 'by a Hungarian' (who found it just as well to conceal his identity, by the way) was scarcely deserved. These are his words: 'Kossuth is neither a statesman nor a politician, neither a sage patriot nor a sound reasoner, but merely a demagogue clown playing a truly pantomimic part in the great tragi-comedy of European history.'

It may be so. As a political prisoner Kossuth knew the inside of a Turkish fortress, as a political refugee he tasted the cordial hospitality of England, as a political exile he died under the sunny skies of Italy, but he remained a power to the last, even if an intermittent one. It was the 'Kossuth question' that brought the Hungarian parliament into collision with the Austrian ministry some years ago, and 'the demagogue clown' was thus indirectly the cause of the fall of a powerful Cabinet on that occasion, just as his funeral, a couple of years later, was the signal of a temporary revolt in the capital.

Then, as now, the great fear that fills every true Magyar heart is the fear of becoming 'Germanised.' Even Magyars of the old school have now abandoned the becoming national costume (more's the pity!), in

spite of their innate conservatism, but the end and aim of every Hungarian is to live and to legislate *for himself*, to retain and develop his own language, to emphasise his own individuality, as a nation, amongst the nations of the world, and therefore to oppose with strongest antagonism the faintest shadow of Austrian innovation or Austrian interference. Not that he is opposed to progress, but it must be progress that is initiated and carried out on principles strictly in accordance with existing patriotic Hungarian notions. Could there, for instance, be a people fonder of their flag than the Hungarians? I doubt it. On Sundays and holidays the red, white and green of the national standard waves and flashes and flaps from every available position. Public edifices, private houses, villa gardens, steam launches, restaurants, swimming baths, shooting galleries, theatres, flower stalls and ice-cream carts all run up a flag as naturally as they put out their best wares and deck themselves in all the finery they possess; the effect of this is very enlivening, especially on a sunny, breezy day.

Later on, I visited the very place where Kossuth, fleeing from his pursuers, crossed the Danube to seek shelter on Turkish soil, and was told how, in an ecstasy of passionate sorrow, he flung himself for the last time on the ground of his much-loved fatherland and kissed it with sobbing breath. Having given up his sword to the Turkish officer on the frontier, by whom he was conducted to a hut for the night, he 'listened to the roaring of the Danube through the Iron Gate, so much in rude harmony with the storm in my heart; and, as I contemplated the annihilation of patriotic hopes so undeservedly extinguished, tears of indescribable grief unconsciously showered down my cheeks.'

Poor Kossuth, the once supreme dictator of Hungary! What a career of triumph and humiliation his was! Hot-headed he may have been, but who can possibly believe that he was lacking in patriotism? Who can possibly deny that indirectly his revolutionary proceedings have benefited his country?

A few years ago, nobody with the smallest pretensions to the title of a 'good patriot' would own to a knowledge of German. If you addressed them in that language they would only shake their heads and feign not to understand. Nowadays, everybody of culture speaks German fluently; but Magyars rarely marry Austrians, and should they do so, they are looked coldly upon ever afterwards, though they are not actually boycotted.

Before 1847 the peasantry were burdened with taxes, whilst the nobles went free; since the reforms then brought about, when the Feudal System was annulled by the Hungarian Diet under Kossuth's dictatorship, though not finally abolished till 1868, the peasants freed and enfranchised, and the system of taxation equalised for the whole nation, the position of the Magyar agriculturist has vastly improved (though, as a matter of fact, his portion of the taxes has not been lessened) because of his emancipation from forced labour and from the payment of dues to his lord. They are also able to become owners of land now, and it is their one aim and ambition in life to be able to buy a few acres and thus transform themselves into landed proprietors.

The word *paraszt* (peasant) means in its primary sense one who cultivates land. In Hungary there are, however, three classes of peasants, each class possessing a distinct social status amongst his fellows. Magyars

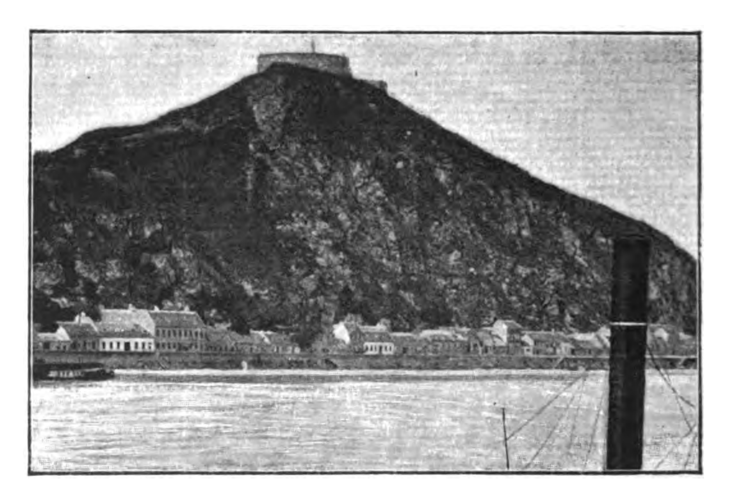
of all ranks are very observant of their own particular codes of etiquette. There are those peasants who *own* their farms and houses; those who *rent* large or small allotments; and those who are merely farm-labourers. Each country town and village has also its own distinctive marks where costume is concerned, though the differences in some cases are so slight as to escape the notice of the cursory foreigner; still, however slight they may be, the Magyar rustic never deviates from them, and is as proud of them as a soldier of his badges. A girl who marries out of her own village retains her own distinguishing marks of costume as long as she lives. Ideas on the marriage question are naturally widely dissimilar in different districts, in a land that is peopled by such a variety of nationalities. It is not etiquette for a peasant to marry out of his own village in some parts, whilst in others it is the correct thing to go as far afield as possible in search of a wife. On these occasions the long procession of carts that brings the bride and her trousseau home is a sight worth seeing. What a scene of laughter, song, gipsy-music, and pistol-shots it is, to be sure! Such a display of horseflesh too!—teams of three or five generally, and all going at a full gallop.

CHAPTER XIII

A trip down the Danube—Scene on board the steamer—Promontor and the cave-dwellers--Turkish, Bulgarian, and Servian ladies—Vingt-et-un on deck--Montenegrins—The breaking up of the ice—The Gibraltar of Europe—Semlin—The first cataract—The Castle of the Nine Towers—St. George's Cave and the *furia infernalis*—Roman ruins—A moral shower-bath—The Iron-Gate Pass—Roumanian officials—Beggars—Water mills and buoys on the Danube—Turnu Severin—Orsova and Trajan's Column—Is it a Revolution?—Market-day—Costumes—A Roumanian village—Fairy-land.

ONE of the most delightful episodes of the delightful six months spent that year in Budapest was a trip down the Danube to Orsova. It was a fine spring morning of the balmiest description when I stepped aboard one of the express steamers belonging to the Danube Steam Navigation Company, and set off, under the shadow of the rocky Gellerthegy, towering up to a height of 300 feet above the river. The decks were crowded with passengers—fair-haired Germans, swarthy Bosnians, peach-complexioned Magyars, haughty Austrians, graceful Dalmatians, silent, white-veiled, or red-fezed Turks, and Roumanians of every degree, from the tall, effeminate-looking dweller in Bucharest to the sallow, uncivilised shepherd from the Wallachian Mountains. There were also Jews of various nationalities, some quite clean and spruce in appearance, others disgustingly the reverse; and of course the ubiquitous gipsy was present. The first-class accommodation is excellent and most

reasonable in price; the second class consists merely of permission to lie, or squat, on the bare deck of the 'fo'cas'le,' and is patronised only by the army of the 'great unwashed,' who usually outnumber the first-class passengers. Amongst such a diversified multitude almost every religion is, naturally, represented. There is the stern puritanism of the Calvinistic Debrecziner, the fervent Catholicism of the pious Romanist, the philo-



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sophic calm of the Unitarian, the moderation of the Greek-Roumanian, the anti-Christianism of the orthodox Hebrew, the infidelism of the modern Jew, and the consciousness of moral superiority that permits a follower of Islam to be amiably patronising to his fellow-passengers, whatsoever creed they may profess. The feeling that invades your whole mind on board one of

these Danube steamers is indescribable, but delicious. A sense of something delightfully novel, healthy and exhilarating pervades your whole being. Is there anywhere else in Europe where you can meet and converse *on equal terms* with people of so many ranks, nations and climes? This has an effect upon the impressionable mind that is at once invigorating, soul-broadening, and horizon-widening. It teaches you to realise the infinite littleness of much that had hitherto appeared important, and impresses upon you the profound wisdom of Pope's trite axiom: 'The proper study of mankind is man.'

My experience is that the more you see of humanity in the broadest sense of the word, the more deeply it interests you. St. Paul evidently knew his world when he wrote that famous sentence: 'And now remaineth Faith, Hope and Charity, but *the greatest of these is Charity.*'

Some people tell us that a keen observation of life induces pessimism. I find, on the contrary, that it distinctly fosters optimism.

However, *revenons à nos moutons!*

The first place we came to was Csepel, an island lying in mid-river, about twenty miles long but not more than a quarter of a mile broad. This separates the river into two arms called the Promontor and the Soroksár; the country on both sides of which consists almost entirely of vineyards, and is famous for its red wine, resembling burgundy. The village of Promontor, by the way, is a singularly interesting place. It has about 2,500 inhabitants, who all live a sort of troglodite life in caves hewn out of the solid rock. When I visited the place during the vintage season, it reminded

me forcibly of the gipsy dwellings in the Albaycin behind Granada. Vines and wild figs clothed the rocks with beauty, and it is surprising how much comfort can be got out of a fair-sized cave by any one fully acquainted with its capacities. Personally, I felt sorely tempted to try and hire one for a limited period. It struck me that there would be something rather jolly in playing at the game of Robinson Crusoe *à la fin de siècle*—for a short time only.

At Paks, a little further down, the character of the country changes entirely; nothing but swamps are to be seen on either side, covered with tall reeds, coarse grass, aquatic plants of various kinds, and inhabited by storks, herons, buzzards, wild duck, moor-hens and other water-fowl. Here and there you see a series of tiny lakes, formed by the overflow of the river. Our steamer bore us on rapidly down stream, through the plains of Somogy. Small towns, large fishing villages, tiny hamlets, basking in the sunshine, came into sight and vanished again in the dim distance almost before you had realised their whereabouts. At Mohács a scene of picturesque confusion ensued, for we were timed to stop there to land passengers and take in fuel. A fresh breeze blew throughout the day, which was scarcely conducive either to the elegance or comfort of the Turkish ladies, whose enormous black silk cloaks and long white muslin veils, puffed out by the wind, gave them a most grotesque appearance. Poor dears! how I pitied them. The whole day they sat crouching to leeward of the saloon, trying to hide themselves from the contaminating gaze of the 'Nazarene dog.' It seemed to me that the elder one, of ample proportions, kept a solemn disapproving eye on all my movements,

but that may have been only a fiction of the imagination on my part. Possibly, as a mother of daughters herself, she was merely pitying in my person the youthful depravity of Christian womanhood. Who knows?

Some Bulgarian ladies attracted my attention both on account of their good looks and their becoming costumes. They were robed in petticoats and aprons of silk, over which they wore long velvet pelisses drawn in round the waist by an embroidered belt. Their luxuriant, glossy black hair was surmounted by stiff little round caps of scarlet cloth, covered with tiny, jingling gold and silver coins. Bracelets of a similar character adorned their wrists, and their small, well-shaped feet were shod in high boots of red leather. An old Servian lady struck me as being quite regal in a loose black velvet garment embroidered with silver, and a coroneted fez on her thick plaits of grey hair. She was pleasant-faced and fat, ready to be amused at everything and talk to anybody. That these ladies were quite as much 'daughters of Eve' as any Western woman was evinced by the fact that they one and all displayed the greatest curiosity about me and my doings. Who was I? was naturally the first question that agitated their gentle breasts; and having discovered from the captain that I was an 'English miss going to Orsova,' they straightway came up and begged to be allowed to make my acquaintance either by means of the French or German language, since 'unfortunately they were unacquainted with my own beautiful tongue.' Of course I willingly assented, whereupon we told each other our respective names, and brought this introductory ceremony to a conclusion by shaking hands cordially

all round. After that we sat down, and I resigned myself into the hands of my new-made acquaintances to be turned inside out, figuratively speaking. Curiosity of that naïve, good-humoured type never offends me; on the contrary, it always deserves to be satisfied. When they had asked all the questions they desired about me, my country, its language, costumes, manners, customs, religion, politics, how we do our hair and what we pay our servants, I took a turn, and got some similar information out of them about their country. They spoke French beautifully, and smoked delicious little cigarettes most daintily the whole day through. Presently one of them drew a pack of cards out of her pocket and proposed a game. I excused myself. It is impossible to play cards and enjoy scenery at the same time. But the Servian lady joined them willingly, and I noticed that these four gambled innocently almost the whole day afterwards. During odd minutes I sat down to watch their game, and found that it was a Bulgarian version of 'vingt-et-un,' which they played for money, though the stakes were not exorbitant. The only persons with whom I may be said to have *really* fallen in love on board were a group of men—there is safety in numbers, you know. They were Servians and Montenegrins. Two of them, who evidently belonged to the upper classes, were dressed in the ugly garb *de rigueur* in Western Europe; the rest, lounging on the 'fo'cas'le,' smoking long brass pipes, wondrously embossed, were evidently peasants; but they were *all*, without exception, gentlemen in the truest sense of the word. Their manly bearing, their close-knit frames, the erectness of their heads, the intelligent expression of their faces, the dignity and ease of their manners

proclaimed this. In spite of the difference in their social positions, they all smoked, laughed, and chatted familiarly together. Poor creatures! they are still barbaric enough to imagine that nobility consists merely in the possession of noble aims and manly virtues. In watching them I began to wonder whether civilisation is indeed a blessing.

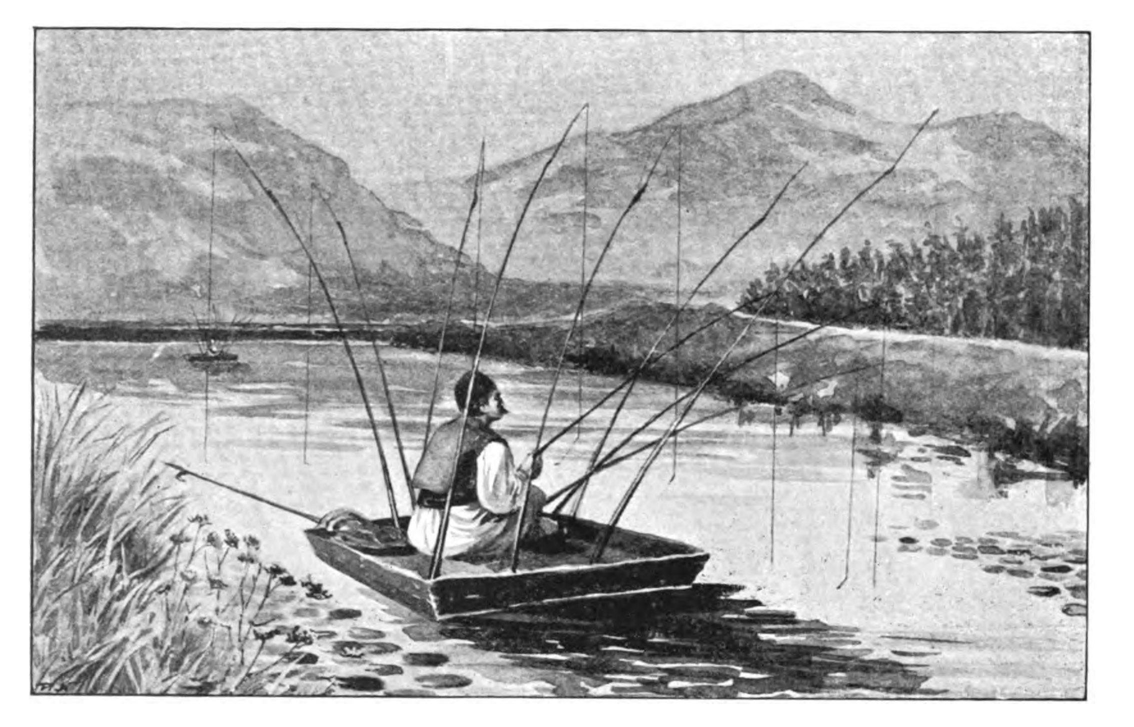
Near Esseg the Danube is joined by the Drave, and changes its character once more. Its waters become darker and clearer, its bed deepens, its course is not so frequently interrupted by channels and it does not wind so much.

The Danube, by the way, is to my mind so essentially feminine in character that I object to give it a masculine article in *any* language. It is eminently capricious, eminently unexpected in its movements, and yet equally charming in each of its many moods. Whether it ripples with silvery tones over a pebbly reach, or flows silently over unfathomable deeps, or washes ruthlessly across low-lying pastures, or submerges its green islets, or rushes roaring and foaming through a rocky pass, it is always interesting, always well worth studying, always full of charm.

You never know just what to expect within the next mile, and there is to most of us a certain pleasure in expectation. The breaking up of the winter's ice on this river is a wondrous sight. The huge blocks of ice borne along by the strength of the current heave and struggle and beat each other, dashing themselves headlong against the massive stone-work of the magnificent bridges that span its broad bosom, with a crash and a roar like the report of a volley of musketry. This season of the year is always a period of anxiety to

dwellers on its banks, for they have not yet forgotten the terrible inundations that have devastated Budapest and swept away numbers of smaller towns and villages. Even as late as 1879 the Danube brought down 'mountains of ice' in its train and laid parts of Budapest under water for three days and three nights. When a rapid thaw takes place higher up the river, the suddenly released waters pour down like a flood, burst the ice, and hurl monster blocks of it high into the air, or up on to the shore, where they crash down and often do considerable damage to boats, water-mills, landing-stages, or anything of that kind which has the misfortune to lie in their way.

From Esseg on as far as Belgrade we skirted along beside Slavonia, for the dark waters that bore us onwards form the line of demarcation between these two countries. The dismantled fortress of Erdöd, celebrated in Hungarian song, stands on a promontory jutting out into the river, which at this part is more than a mile wide. Presently the tower of Illok came into view; then we passed fertile villages and fishing hamlets again, each of which possesses a ruined castle of some description. This sounds like the Rhine, doesn't it? In reality, however, it is most *un*like. After having journeyed on the Danube you cannot help feeling that the Rhine is a trifle toy-like and 'stagey' in effect. The Rhine is pretty and somewhat artificial-looking; the Danube is grand and somewhat barbaric in character. After a short distance, the 'aspect of those shores' changed, however. The cottages, the sedgy pools, the low-lying marshes, were replaced by immense forests of oak, beech and pine trees, where countless herds of swine are fattened to be sent up to the markets



MEZÖSÉG FISHING

of Vienna and Budapest, either in the form of pork or bacon. Now and then the rough hut of a swineherd, raised on poles and built against the trunk of a giant oak, comes forth picturesquely to view. Formerly these huts, like the wayside inns, afforded shelter to brigands of the most romantic and poetical kind, but nowadays, alas! there is not such an article to be found throughout the length and breadth of Hungary; though everybody is ready to tell you tales without number about these *Szegény legény*, who all seem to have been individually rivals of our own Claude Duval. Sometimes the rather discordant notes of a horn wake the echoes around, and you gaze into the dark depths of the forest almost hoping that you may catch a glimpse there of a modern Robin Hood calling his merry men together. As a matter of fact—truth is generally unpalatable--it is merely a solitary Wallachian swineherd calling up his pigs. Such is life in this end-of-a-century!

The next place of importance on the Danube is Petervárad, sometimes called the Gibraltar of Europe, and not inappropriately so either, for it is a rock-built fortress standing on a promontory that rears a most formidable array of walls and bastions over the Danube's stream. They rise tier above tier and seem to be literally perforated with loop-holes for cannon. The town itself nestles under the shadow of this great fortress that seems to keep watch with its thousand and one eyes over the surrounding country for miles and miles. Before the mighty ramparts of Petervárad had faded into the dim distance we were gliding beneath lofty hills, their summits clothed by primeval forests, though the lower slopes are cultivated into vineyards.

About half-way between here and Semlin the river Tissa empties its generous stream into the Danube, and an hour or so further on we steamed up to the quay of the latter city, where there ensued a picturesque scene of tumult and confusion such as is dear to the soul of an artist. The majority of our passengers landed there and many fresh ones also came on board. It was indeed a strange, wild scene, and one worth going some distance not only to see, but also to hear. Such a babel of tongues! Magyar, Windic, Greek, French, German, Servian, Turkish, 'little Russian,' all being talked at the top of their voices at the same time by jostling crowds. The porters who carried the luggage of the new-comers on board were a study in themselves. Savage, uncanny faces, wild, unkempt locks, flashing eyes, rough voices. Did you not know their kindly harmlessness by previous experience of them elsewhere, you would shrink away in fear from their clamouring persons. They are, however, not above resorting to something like the method often employed by the London cabby. 'What! This is all you give me!' they will cry in tones of simulated fury whilst they gaze contemptuously at the coin that has just been put into their lean, brown hands. The pertinacity with which they clamoured for more and the rare cases in which it availed them anything amused me immensely.

I have never seen such an expression of bitter, contemptuous scorn on the face of any human being as that depicted on the speaking countenance of a man who had brought on board one small portmanteau for a young Bosniak gentleman attired in a big great-coat lined with fur and trimmed with sable; the silent contempt bestowed upon his torrent of expostulation being of no

apparent value as a quietus, was followed up by a kick and a curse, whereupon he went meekly on his way without another word. I was really quite sorry when the tumult calmed itself and the bell rang for us to start off again towards Drenkova and the Cataracts. A few years ago the navigation of the Danube was much more difficult and dangerous than it is at present, because the bed of the river is composed of reefs with only narrow channels between them. By means of blasting, however, the waterway has been vastly improved and a good deal of the danger done away with, though there is still a certain amount of excitement for small craft in 'shooting the rapids.' Below Drenkova the fall is fully eight feet, and the boatmen dash recklessly over with a muttered invocation either to the Virgin or Allah, as the case may be. Sometimes, alas! like virtue, this invocation 'is its own reward' and the boat is splintered into matchwood; occasionally it even results in that quaintest of all spectacles, a fisherman's funeral.

'From small beginnings often great things come,' was the thought that flashed through my mind when just below the island of Moldova some curious-looking sand-hills on the shore were pointed out to me as the 'beginning of the south-eastern Karpathians.' Just below, at New Moldova, a military frontier post, the Danube surprises you by suddenly expanding and transforming itself into a shining, silvery lake, whose sandy shores gleam golden in the sunlight against a background of dark green pine-trees and purple or brown mountains; but when you have steamed across its broad expanse you find that the rocky barrier is broken by a narrow pass, through which a roaring, foaming current forces its noisy way. The draught in this pass is terrific. There

is always a strong wind there, even on the calmest summer's day. The water rages along blindly, foaming and eddying over the reefs, sending up showers of spray, and the steamer rocks from side to side continuously in a way that feels delightfully dangerous. Lofty cliffs shut you in on each side. Towering above you on the heights of the left bank stand the crumbling ruins of what has been a magnificent feudal castle. Now it houses nothing more formidable than rats, eagles, vultures, and 'such-like vermin,' as one of the sailors told me with a contemptuous shrug, pointing to a small group of gipsies huddled together on the 'fo'cas'le.' It used to boast of nine watch-towers, seven of which still remain in a fair state of preservation, commanding the Danube and Golumbacz, where the Greek Princess Helena is supposed to have been imprisoned. These crags are perforated with fissures, one of which was pointed out to me as the veritable cavern where St. George slew the Dragon. Sanitary officers being unknown at that date, however, the carcase was left there to decay, and is said to have brought into being a particularly venomous species of gnat, called by the peasants 'murder-flies,' that infest this cave during June and July, whence they pour forth in clouds to the extreme alarm and discomfort of the herdsmen and their flocks. It is known to naturalists, I am told, under the cognomen of *furia infernalis*; but don't ask me to vouch for this statement. I am merely 'repeating the tale as it was told to me.'

On looking back after passing the first rapids you cannot help being struck by the sublimity of the scene, unless you happen to be gambling, like the Roumanian ladies. About half a mile below Golum-

bacz are the remains of an old Roman fort and the Via Trajana, whilst along the Hungarian bank of the river runs the famous Szechgenyi road, constructed by the Government at the instance and from the plans of the patriotic Count István Szechgenyi, so well known for his participation in the 1848 affair. This roadway is a triumph of modern engineering skill. In some places it has had to be widened by terraces of masonry built on to the rock, and in others it has been cut through the very mountains themselves. People and animals upon this road looked almost as tiny as the contents of a child's Noah's ark, seen from the deck of our steamer, rushing along by this time at a pace that makes you feel life really *is* worth living—for the next half-hour, at any rate.

After passing a whole series of Roman fortifications we reached the cataracts of Tilacz and Tachtalia, formed by two hard, porphyry reefs crossing the river almost like dams. They are a mile and a half in length, but you do not realise this fact because of the pace. Where *they* end the whirlpool begins. How many of the human race has this whirlpool sent to join the great majority! How many craft has it reduced to matchwood! Our captain gave the order to turn off steam when we reached the rapids, and we were borne rapidly onwards, merely by the force of the current, past 'the Buffalo,' a huge rock standing in midstream, across the seething, boiling flood, and round a promontory into still water. The striking contrast of quiet, lake-like proportions into which the Danube widens again is wonderful. At the 'Graben' it contracts once more. Steam is again turned off, and we are swept through another gorge over the third great rapid, and into

another broad channel which divides itself into two arms that clasp in their strong embrace the craggy Servian island of Porecz. For the next twenty-five miles Roman fortifications are the chief attraction; they culminate on the left bank in the superb triple-towered castle of Triule, and are most interesting and beautiful specimens of Roman antiquities. Almost immediately afterwards you come to the celebrated Kazan Pass. The cliffs here rear their summits almost perpendicularly more than 2,000 feet above the level of the water, and underneath these rocks, narrowed to an incredibly small channel, rushes the full stream of the mighty Danube, raging tumultuously and dashing itself furiously against the rugged, storm-worn sides. The roar is simply deafening. I felt myself growing pale involuntarily. It was magnificent! The acme of wild sublimity; but I breathed more freely when I found myself safely out of the defile, gazing with dreamy eyes at the peaceful little village of Old Gradina, and scarcely able to believe that a moment before I had been 'assisting' at the spectacle of Nature in one of her most savage aspects.

A scene like that is a sort of moral shower-bath. It makes you shiver and blench, for the moment, but its effects are bracing.

Afterwards it was all 'plain sailing,' past Wallachian villages similar to those already described in Transylvania, till we came to the Iron Gate Pass, about twenty miles below Orsova. This is the only bit of the Danube that Westerners in general ever hear of, and it used to be considered even more dangerous than either of the others. Now, however, dynamite has been employed to blast some of the submarine reefs, and thus

widen the channel, and a new canal is being constructed which will be opened for traffic in October, to enable steamers to avoid this pass. The mountains here sloped landwards, consequently the scenery was a trifle tame to me after the 'hair-breadth 'scapes' I had already gone through. During the whole transit from Budapest my slumbers had resolved themselves into chance-naps on saloon sofas whilst there happened to be nothing particularly interesting to look at. This



DANUBIAN WATER-MILLS

was not often, by the way, therefore I felt rather 'dead-beat' by the time we landed at Sozoreny, amidst a crowd of brilliant-eyed, fierce-moustached Roumanian officials, who all looked as though they were going to seize upon bag and baggage and haul you off to summary execution for some unknown offence. This is a little 'trying' until you get accustomed to it, and discover that a patriotic hauteur is *the* chief characteristic of officialdom in Wallachia. Perhaps one of the most characteristic features of the Danube, and certainly not

one of the least picturesque or amusing, are the water-mills, of most original and primitive construction. Some of them float about aimlessly almost in midstream, and, as you may imagine, often get run into and hopelessly broken up. They consist generally of two long, roughly constructed boats moored side by side, with some equally primitive arrangement of wheels fixed between them, to be worked by the force of the current. You see similar contrivances 'up-country' on Chinese rivers. The rafts of timber we met with reminded me of Norway, so did the quaint, flat-bottomed barges without any keel. To a connoisseur in river-craft, the curious-looking boats, full of pigs, cattle, or horses, going from the Servian forests to Vienna and Budapest, would have been a revelation; but the most comical things of all are the buoys attached by the fisher-folk to their sturgeon-nets, and manufactured out of a handful of reeds gathered on the banks. Frequently you see a stork or a pelican standing calmly on one leg on these buoys, which enhances the effect marvellously. All the wild birds seem so wonderfully tame, too. They will allow the steamer to pass quite close to them 'without turning a feather'—I was going to say 'hair,' but that would be scarcely appropriate to a bird—and merely gaze meditatively at the human beings aboard as if they were wondering where we keep our wings, and why we don't make use of them.

Never did I see *quite* so many beggars anywhere, not even in Spain, as were to be seen that day on the landing stage of Sozoreny, and such disgusting beggars too. Yet they were eminently picturesque in some respects—from a distance. Poor things! Ugh! It makes me shudder still to remember the gaping wounds

and unnatural deformities of the wretched creatures who insisted on exhibiting themselves and making clamorous appeals for charity: 'A couple of kreutzers only, gracious Princess, for the love of the dear Lord God Almighty!' was the cry echoing round me on every side.

'My good people, *do* get out of the way and let me pass. There would not be a kreutzer left for myself if I gave to all of you. I am very, very sorry for you, but I am neither a Rothschild nor a Vanderbilt,' I exclaimed at last in tones of mingled pity, annoyance and disgust; but it was of little avail, and the Roumanian police in their barbaric uniforms merely shrugged their shoulders when I appealed to them for aid. These easy-going individuals are garbed in coarse grey cloth turned up with white frieze, and wear a kind of fisherman's cap in black lamb's-wool with the peak hanging down behind. They are military of aspect and decorated with swords—more for show than use, I believe. After my luggage, consisting of a single hand-bag, had been carefully examined, I chartered a two-horse fly and drove away to Turnu Severin in search of an hotel. Having found one and secured a room, I interviewed the head-waiter, a man endowed with the aspect of a brigand and the manners of a prince, and got a large fund of information out of him respecting the place, the neighbourhood, the dinner-hour and the nature of the menu. Turnu Severin has an extensive dock belonging to the Danube Steam Navigation Company, and is already quite an important place, though it has only been established about fifteen or twenty years. The fashionable promenade was thronged with the gayest of *promeneurs* and *promeneuses* attired in the most

Parisian of Paris toilettes, whilst on the unrailed-off uplands around troops of buffaloes stood out brown and shaggy against the clear blue sky. The contrast was piquant. There was so much to amuse me that sleep seemed out of question, but when my natural curiosity did at last permit me to lie down comfortably in 'my little bed' and take a good sleep, you may imagine that I gave a sigh of sweet content. Oh! how tired my whole being was! completely used up, physically and mentally! One is not a daughter of Eve for nothing! Next day, bag in hand, I sauntered up to the railway station in time to catch the train to Orsova, and took care to get into a carriage full of Roumanians, all talking at once. I always endeavour to fraternise with some of the natives when I am rushing through any country *à l'Américaine.* It's the only thing to do if you want reliable information. My companions on this occasion gave me all sorts of interesting items; but if I were to relate half of all I saw, and a tenth part of what everybody told me, my book would expand into many volumes, therefore you must be content with a short and pithy description of Orsova itself, the most eastward-lying town in Hungary, and delightfully oriental in character. All the houses are built of unbaked bricks, and each one in the suburbs is surrounded by a strong stockade of closely woven withies bristling all over with sharp stakes. These stockades are as Dacian in idea and mode of construction as the people, their costumes and their manners; and as necessary as they are antique, for wolves infest the neighbourhood, I was told, during the winter. They (the stockades, *not* the wolves) are very interesting because they are supposed to be the only surviving form

of the wooden palisades called *limes*, employed by the Romans to surround the frontiers of their empires. On Trajan's Column there is a representation of the construction of the *limes* uniting the Rhine and the Danube, and as I watched the erection of a new palisade at Orsova it gradually dawned upon my mind that it was not the first time such a scene had met my eyes. Both the mode of procedure and the physique of the workers seemed identical. Even the short white tunic confined loosely round the waist and the peaked lamb's-wool cap, which are still the ordinary garb of the Orsova artisans of to-day, closely resemble those worn by the *riparienses* in the Roman period.

With my usual 'foolish temerity' I went rambling off amongst the mountains alone, carrying in my pocket a few sticks of chocolate by way of provisions. Frequently at such times I lose my way and wander about for hours, so it is best to be provided with a trifle wherewith to still the pangs of hunger. The savage grandeur of the rocky fastnesses thrilled me with an awesome joy known only to a few natures. Wild, fierce-looking shepherds tended immense flocks of sheep and spent their intervals of leisure making weird music on a species of bagpipe, whose barbaric harmonies seemed at the same time to give voice to the scenery and take its own character from its surroundings, for when I listened intently to these crude, wild sounds, they seemed to take form and embody in themselves the tender melody of the rippling, laughing streamlet beside me, almost drowned as it was by the harsh roar of the boisterous mountain torrent leaping, laughing and tumbling on its headlong path over the broken crags to the verdant valley, far, far below me. Often

when climbing along a ledge a sudden Whir-r-r! over my head would startle me, and stopping suddenly in my climb to gaze upwards I saw, time after time, magnificent specimens of eagles fly screeching across the gorges.

'Around the rugged rocks the ragged rascals ran' was the stupid phrase that kept running through my brain whilst listening to the wind, which blew hissing and howling round the rocks like angry 'air-devils' that would fain have rent me in pieces. But fleecy, filmy cloud-spirits came swiftly and silently to my aid, enveloping me softly in their white folds for a few minutes, and then passing onwards in the same spectre-like fashion. Oh! it was delicious! Almost as good as being an enchanted princess in a fairy-tale, and without the inconveniences usually attaching to a royal position of any kind. It made you feel so completely out of the world, so thoroughly *above* mundane affairs and human sordidness, yet my own mind was not sufficiently original to break out into blank verse, or even lyrical poetry. Instead of this, some of Byron's words fell unconsciously from my lips as being the only ones at all capable of expressing the emotions awakened by that infinite, profound silence, broken merely by the voice of the wind or the discordant scream of an eagle. These birds are looked upon by the people as veritable emissaries of the Evil One. Whenever one of them crosses the path of a peasant, or flies over the head of a shepherd, you see a sign of the cross made and hear an ejaculatory appeal to some saint or other.

It was evening before I turned my steps downwards, and it is at nightfall that Orsova looks its very best, for at that hour the setting sun bathes its tumbledown Prout-like houses, its crazy roofs and tiny casements,

its metal cupolas, and church spires, in a golden glow, with rich purple shadows and bright vermilion high-lights. If you happen to be one of those lucky people whom Nature has endowed with the power of sketching, you will be enraptured with the place, the people, and the semi-Eastern groups and scenes waiting to be immortalised, yet all-unconscious of their own beauty. How the air there makes you eat and sleep, too! My head was scarcely on the pillow before Morpheus claimed me for his own; but the next morning early a terrible hubbub awakened me, and, springing out of bed, I rushed to the window wondering whether a revolution had begun in the night. Oh, no! nothing of that kind. It was merely market-day; still, there is no other place in Europe where market-day presents *quite* such a barbaric spectacle as it does in Orsova. Serbs, Turks, Wallachians, Magyars, Jews, Germans, all shouting, chaffering, haggling, gesticulating in such a fashion, and with so much energy, that you expect every moment to see the whole population engaged in a hand-to-hand fight. However, these violent altercations usually end in peaceful bargains, apparently full of satisfaction to both parties, if one may judge from the expression of their faces. Directly my clothes had been 'scrambled' on to me, I hastily swallowed a cup of coffee, and rushed out to watch the people coming into town. Some arrived on foot, carrying large shallow baskets of garden-stuff or dairy-produce, others came on the backs of mules, donkeys, or rat-tailed, sturdy little horses; but the most picturesque 'bits' were the groups to be seen on board the vegetable-boats, the cattle-barges, and the small steamers. I spent nearly the whole day wandering about, observing and tasting.

The process of purchasing any eatable that caught my fancy or looked 'truly Oriental' amongst the wares of the market-people was most amusing. They laughed over it just as much as I did, and were immensely interested in seeing afterwards whether 'her Graciousness' appreciated the purchased article or not. If I made a wry face they broke out into exclamations of dismay, and quickly offered me something else to take away the taste.

The women of Orsova are habited in a long white robe reaching from throat to ankle and beautifully embroidered in a delightfully harmonised combination of green, red, blue and orange. This is gathered in at the waist by a broad girdle of the same, edged by a deep black fringe hanging nearly to the bottom of the skirt. The men attire themselves in braided jackets, loose trousers, moccasins, and fierce-looking moustaches. They wear a species of black mop on their heads, and both sexes are altogether charming, but quite *un*-European in appearance.

Towards afternoon I fraternised with a peasant family starting homewards, and went off with them, seated on the back of a steady-going mule, as far as a picturesque little village. It had a church-tower painted with rough but graphic frescoes, and the stockades round the houses were fully ten feet high. Vines and tropical-looking creepers climbed all over the palings and cottages, up the trees, down the rocks, and everywhere else in a graceful luxuriance that charmed me. The men there were dreadfully wild and savage of aspect, but the women had pretty, gentle-looking faces, lovely hair, and graceful figures.

A very inexpensive but delicious wine called *Schiller*

is made in this district. It has a delicate, musky flavour, and is a lovely ruby colour. Noting the leather bottles and the dry, scooped-out gourds used by the people for cups, bowls, and even cooking purposes, you are led to wonder whether by some means or other you have got bodily back into the scriptural days of the Old or New Testament. How much pottery and how many embroideries, such as my soul craves, did I see on the walls of those humble cots! Still, you can no more ask a peasant to sell you his pottery than you could ask a connoisseur to sell you his priceless old china. The Tenth Commandment is a great nuisance!

Then in the gloaming I wandered back along the road to Orsova, ate my supper wearily, and after listening to a simple folk-song sung by a man out in the courtyard to an exquisitely melancholy air, I trotted off to bed in readiness for an early start next day to Hercules-Bad.

The ride there was long and tiring, but the game was certainly quite worth the candle. As its name implies, it was once a Roman colony. When you get to the entrance of the gorge you notice a picturesque church towering above you; then you turn a corner, and step into Fairy-land. Imagine this in the nineteenth century! Greek colonnades, exotic flowers, statues, fountains, gardens, woods, a Kurhaus of Roman architecture, the interior painted with frescoes of gods and goddesses. There is a big bath, too, the outside aspect of which is as heavenly as the inside is Tartarus-like. It is here that, to quote the common parlance, 'people' just step into the hot water, and *feel the evil being boiled out of them.* Possibly that's why the atmosphere within its precincts is so suggestive of soup. Taking this as

the *raison d'être* of Hercules-Bad, one almost regrets the poetical character of its surroundings. Vast picnic-parties come up to spend the day and get 'boiled down,' besides the regular Kur guests who stay the whole season, more or less. It is one of those rare places where Nature and Art have combined to produce an 'earthly Paradise;' yet, even there, I was obliged to confess reluctantly to my own inner consciousness after only a very few hours' observation of the Adams and Eves around me, that 'the trail of the serpent was over it all.' A most fortunate circumstance, too, for there's nothing that palls like perfection in any form.

One of the most delicious things at Hercules-Bad is its river. A rushing, dancing, foaming mountain torrent, clear as crystal, and as full of trout as it is of light and movement. The hotels there are distinctly dear, but neither dull nor dirty. If you are fond of lonely rambles through lovely scenes, you can have them in this district to your heart's content. Should you prefer a *solitude à deux*, you will find Lovers' Walks, Lovers' Wells, Lovers' Caves, Lovers' Seats, and Lovers' Leaps in plenty, generally as solitary as any pair of lovers could possibly desire, for the ordinary *Kurgäste* do not believe in taking walks and spoiling the look of their smart foot-gear, when they can sit all day in a garden listening to bands, reading the papers, and flirting with each other *ad lib.*, though they admire forests and mountains sincerely and enthusiastically—at a distance. The 'waters' are of two kinds. The sulphur-thermal springs are considered the strongest in the world. There are several of them, the largest and hottest of which gushes forth in a column 18 in. in diameter, and has a temperature of 131° Fahrenheit.

The old Roman and Turkish remains found in various directions are most interesting; amongst these is an aqueduct. The modern military hospital is surmounted by a statue of Hercules, and in one of the chambers of the Hercules Bath (still in use, and remaining unchanged since the Roman period) there is a life-size figure of this Deity carved in relief on an enormous block of stone that forms one of the side walls. But the twenty-four hours—all that inexorable Fate permitted me to spend in this veritable Garden of Eden—slipped by with inconceivable rapidity, and regretfully mounting my fiery (?) steed we started back towards Orsova at a jog-trot pace that would have cured the most chronic sufferer from 'liverishness,' I verily believe. Indeed, it took so much out of me that when my animal, of mule-like breed, stopped finally before the door of my hotel, I almost *rolled* off into the arms of the polite head-waiter with the brigand moustache, and had scarcely strength left to murmur: 'A glass of milk and a roll, in my room.'

By the time they arrived I was in bed and half asleep, but the waiter's voice roused me sufficiently to drink a deep draught before oblivion quite overcame me. You see they are really *very* Parisian in Orsova—no chambermaids; waiters to do everything for you at the best hotels.

CHAPTER XIV

The *Csigány*—A gipsy king's funeral—Micklos Munckácsy—Artist—Easter at Budapest—The Whitsuntide king—Curious Easter customs—The *Fonoda*.

OF all the divers peoples that go to make up the polyglot nation of Modern Hungary none are so despised and insulted as the poor gipsies; yet what would any festivity in Hungary be without their music? Take away the 'fiddling devils' and it loses a great part of its greatest charm, to my mind. They are supposed to have migrated into Hungary from Hindostan in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. At first they had no civil or legal rights whatever, and anybody who killed a gipsy had merely to pay the same fine that was imposed upon anyone who killed his neighbour's dog, but by degrees they became more and more emancipated, and have now equal rights with any other nationality from a legal point of view. Socially, however, they are still nowhere. To the Hungarian mind a gipsy *is* a gipsy always, and though they may be godlike as musicians they are merely vermin as humanity. Even those who have given up the wandering life and been settled for generations are not permitted to dwell amongst the villagers and mix with them on terms of equality. Far from it! The gipsy quarter is *outside* the village bounds. Many of them are employed as brick-makers,

basket-makers, or even agricultural labourers all the work-a-day week; at other seasons they form the orchestra of the place, and play willingly hour after hour for the peasants to sing or dance. Music is a natural gift in a *Czigány*, and appears to have always been so in men and women alike. At the opening of the National Assembly on the Rákos Plain in the sixteenth century, we hear of a *Czigány* band who provided the music under the leadership of a celebrated gipsy, Kármen; and the composition of the stirringly martial Rákoczy march, which has come to be considered the national anthem of Hungary, is attributed to a gipsy woman, Czinka Panna, who lived in the eighteenth century, and was the leader of a fine band. It is entirely due to the talent of the *Czigányok* for playing by ear that such numbers of the old Hungarian songs and airs have come down intact to our own days, since the earliest musicians never wrote down their compositions. To enumerate the total number of gipsy bands in Budapest alone would be impossible. Every little coffee-house, every fifth-rate restaurant, every retail wine-cellar even, has its own special *Czigányok*, who play daily and nightly for the delectation of its customers. Some of these are, however, of a rather squeaky-scratchy description, I must admit, and very unlike the first-rate bands. The aristocratic club, called 'The Casino,' prides itself upon having secured the permanent services of *the* best gipsy orchestra in the world; but the hotels: 'Az Angol Kiralyné' and the 'Hungaria' both run it very close on this point.

The leader of the Casino band is, by the way, himself not only an aristocrat, but also an autocrat, being recognised by his entire tribe as their rightful and

hereditary ruler. When the late leader, Pál Rácz, died, the whole city turned out to give him quite a regal funeral. It was indeed an imposing spectacle, and affecting too. It is always affecting to see a nation in tears (even though you know they will be laughing and dancing half an hour later), and the sobs of vast multitudes make one weep out of pure sympathy. The memory of that endless procession winding slowly along the wide boulevards to the narrow grave in the big cemetery will always be with me. How the streets were thronged! Nobles and nonentities, priests and peasants, artists and artisans, university dons and *demi-mondaines*, journalists and Jew-tradesmen. Everybody! Everybody! Every rank, every age, every class of life found its representatives amongst the voiceless, weeping multitudes that lined the broad boulevards to watch the funeral *cortège* pass.

Troops, military bands playing Chopin's *Marche Funèbre,* flags and cars filled with wreaths preceded the white and gold coffin, immediately in front of which walked the son and heir of the dead man playing on his father's violin the famous air: 'Nefelics' (Forget me not), one of his best-known compositions.

We had places on a balcony at the corner of the Sándor-út, and long before we could catch a glimpse of the bier the tones of this simple, touching melody were borne by the breeze to our ears. Slowly nearer and nearer it came. Profound silence reigned amidst the vast throngs standing respectfully, the men bareheaded. It was as though the very soul of that instrument were wailing out its depths of sorrow at the loss of its much-loved master.

For *so* long they had been *so* much to each other,

and now—their souls were cut asunder. The effect was wonderful! heartrending!

The gipsy-king was followed to his last resting-place by all the members of the club (not as a sovereign ruler but as a king of music), and behind these the weeping multitudes followed. When the sorrowing voice of the violin died away in the far distance I became aware, too, that my tears were also falling like a summer shower. What a thing it is to be impressionable! I should not dare to confess to such weakness before a people so self-controlled as ourselves, were it not for the fact that nowadays everybody is obliged to admit that such a deal depends upon 'environment.' This is the reason, possibly, that Hungary gives to the world great musicians like Liszt, great patriots like Kossuth, great poets like Petöfy, great singers like Gerster, great comic actresses like Palmay, great violinists like Nachez, or great painters like Munckácsy, rather than merchant princes, or great scientists, or men of inventive genius. Miklos Munckácsy is a man well known not only in Europe but also 'across the herring pond' for his magnificent pictures of gigantic size and superb draughtsmanship, principal amongst which are: 'Christ before Pilate,' 'The Death of Mozart,' and 'Milton dictating to his Daughters.' *À propos* of the former an anecdote in connection with the artistic cook, Maddalena, just occurs to me. Munckácsy is a Hungarian by birth though a Frenchman by adoption, and his luxurious studios in Paris are a source of wonderment even in that city of luxury. But though living in Paris he does not forget his nationality, and his pictures are always sent to Budapest for exhibition direct from the Sedelmayer Gallery and before they begin their tour

of the world. Having quarrelled with the French Salon during the earlier days of his career, he persistently refuses to let them show any of his pictures.

Well, the Hungarians are patriotic *and* artistic, so each time a new Munckácsy picture is on view at the Royal Academy of their metropolis the whole population go 'cracked' on painting for the time being, and constitute themselves art critics often of the funniest description.

Maddalena, the artistic cook, of course became affected by the prevailing malady, and in one of her already-mentioned dissertations on art she solemnly and in momentous tones assured me of her complete admiration and entire approval of this great artist's works:

'But, if there is any fault to be found with anything, in any of his pictures, it is perhaps this: Christ's nose is just a trifle too long, for my taste.'

When, a year or two later, M. and Madame de Munckácsy arrived in Budapest one spring morning on a short visit, we were amongst the throng who rushed off enthusiastically to leave our cards upon them at the hotel Hungaria, where they were staying. The rather eccentric-looking painter and his little, lively, high-voiced French wife were obliged, indeed, to hold a sort of impromptu reception every afternoon for the first few days. How tired they must have been by the time they bade adieu to Hungary! Mornings spent with interviewers and journalists, afternoons given to paying or receiving calls, evenings devoted to banquets, soirées and torchlight processions day after day!

One illustrated paper was enterprising enough to obtain from Munckácsy a very clever caricature of him-

self drawn with a pen and ink in nine strokes, three of which were devoted to the porcupine-style of coiffure he affected, whether from obligation or choice did not transpire.

How he laughed when one day I related to him the story of Maddalena's *critique* on the nose of his Christ! Like Franz Liszt and Maurus Jokai, Miklos Munckácsy is one of the few men of genius to whom fate has been kind. Twenty-five years ago he was a poor, unknown peasant; to-day, he is a celebrated artist, the husband of a French baroness, and a man of wealth and influence.

During the whole of Passion Week pilgrimages are to be seen wending their way chanting litanies to and from the various 'Calvary-hills' to be found in so many places. At each Station of the Cross a halt is made and prayers are recited. When Golgotha is finally reached a sort of *Miserere* is performed, and then the pilgrims trudge back, still chanting and telling their beads.

On Good Friday there are Holy Sepulchres in every church and solemn Requiem Masses are going on all day long. Some of these services are remarkably impressive. The Saviour's figure in the Tomb is usually the most doll-like of wax images, but the flowers, jewels and other accessories are always of the most superb kind, and the singing is perfect in its woeful harmonies. At the Chapel Royal and the Garrison Churches the tomb is always guarded by relays of soldiers fully armed, and the walls of the edifices themselves are adorned by designs formed of muskets, bayonets, ancient battle-axes, and all sorts of military weapons.

On Holy Thursday a foot-washing ceremony takes place in the Cathedral, and everybody with any preten-

sions to piety makes a point of being present at this ceremony. The theatres are generally closed during the Thursday, Friday and Saturday, so are the schools and most of the factories, but not the shops. The markets on the Danube quays are a sight to see on Saturday, for Easter is the greatest feast in the Hungarian calendar, and 'all the world' must be plentifully supplied with the correct Easter dainties. Such a laughing and chaffering, buying and selling, and exchanging of good wishes goes on. But it is all over by midday, and everybody hurries home to prepare for the coming ceremonies, since the Resurrection in Hungary begins about three o'clock on Saturday afternoon, and goes on at intervals until each particular parish has 'resurrected' its own special Saviour; then everybody having 'assisted' at everybody else's festivities the whole population goes home to supper filled with the intense satisfaction that is always supposed to follow on doing your duty conscientiously.

On Easter Eve the whole of this beautiful twin city seems one vast mingled scene of bells and banners, military music and monster masses. The congregation of each church parades through the streets headed by martial music, carrying the figure of its Saviour, its Virgin and its patron saint, amidst burning tapers, under silken canopies, wreathed with flowers and followed by long processions of devout parishioners singing resurrection hymns. Up and down the city they go in all the pomp and ceremony of 'bell and book and candle,' passing between throngs of bareheaded onlookers who watch silently till the last vestige of the procession has passed, and then troop off to the next parish and take up their positions in readiness for the next procession.

The windows of every house along the route of each procession are illuminated by lighted candles, which are extinguished as soon as it has passed. This produces an effect in the twilight that is most curious and impressive. Music, and light, and life before Christ; silence, dimness, and desolation behind Him.

To describe the magnificent ceremonial of the High Mass on Easter Day would be impossible. It must be seen in all its gorgeousness to be realised. The exquisite solos, the splendid orchestral accompaniments, the flowers, the jewelled plate, the lighted candles, the crowded congregations in holiday attire kneeling in the dim religious light of the old time-stained edifices, present scenes at once solemn and beautiful.

Easter all over Hungary is marked by great festivities. Outside the towns and villages large booths are generally erected and a regular pleasure fair is held. Round the churches, too, you always see stalls for the sale of gilded gingerbread, flowers, rosaries, prayerbooks and 'holy pictures.' On these occasions singing, dancing, and games of chance and skill are carried on all day, but the principal feature in these amusements is always horse-racing, of which the Magyar peasant is very fond. Animals of all sorts, sizes, and ages are 'entered' by their owners, who ride them without a vestige of either saddle or bridle. They generally go in for flat races, though a water-jump is sometimes introduced, but steeple-chases are practically unknown amongst them because hedges, stone walls, five-bar gates and suchlike obstacles are conspicuous by their absence in Hungary. One of the most curious customs, and not precisely pleasant for the victim either, is that the peasant lover conceals himself near the door of the cottage where his intended lives, with a bucket of water in his hand, and directly she appears



rushes at her and pours the contents over her head until she bribes him to stop by a present of painted eggs and often a kiss. Amongst the upper classes this custom is still observed by the young men carrying bottles of perfume in their pockets when they go to call upon their lady friends and 'squirting' it over them whilst they exchange Easter greetings.

Another pretty old custom prevalent later on in the year in most parts of Hungary is that of choosing a Whitsuntide king. On Whit Monday the peasants congregate at the official residence of the village magistrate and start off in a long procession, headed by the gipsy band, to the neighbouring fields, where a race on horseback takes place. This is always an exciting scene. Each rider has his own particular partisans, who shout and gesticulate all the time, urging him on and begging him not to disgrace them and himself by getting left behind. The winner is afterwards proclaimed the Whitsuntide king, and his sovereignty lasts for a year; at the end of this time, however, he is eligible for re-election; and this rustic monarch has both his rights and his responsibilities. For the next twelve months he is privileged to 'drink free' at the expense of the community, and is usually much lionised by the prettiest girls of the place; on the other hand, he must keep up the credit of his position by appearing as the jauntiest of his sex, the best dancer, the best drinker, the best songster, and the readiest impromptu poet, and take upon his own shoulders the arrangements of all the *fêtes* and festivities in the village during his tenure of office, from the burial of Christmastide on Ash Wednesday and the May-Day ceremonies, to the harvest festival and the pig-killing *fêtes*.

The christening of a child is an even more solemn

and long-winded affair than a wedding, and the sponsors on those occasions take things very much *au sérieux.* It is no joke to be a godmother in Hungary, I can assure you. *Experientia docet.* It means a continual giving of advice and—presents.

Perhaps the pleasantest institution in Hungarian villages, though, is what is popularly known as the *Fonoda.* Strictly speaking this word means merely a private house, but it has come to have a special sense of its own, and is applied to the gatherings of both sexes on winter evenings for the purposes of employment and flirtation. Long wooden benches are ranged down the walls on both sides of a private house that is usually chosen for its size and the convenience of its position. The girls sit spinning in one long row (chaperoned by a few of the elder women) and the men sit shelling corn or twisting reeds opposite. Whilst they work songs are sung, riddles are asked, stories are related and glances are exchanged. During the intervals of rest all sorts of games are played, the game of love amongst others, and one or two of the party often bring a jar of wine with which to treat the whole company. Apples, pears, chestnuts and honey cakes are also distributed sometimes, and the evenings spent at the *Fonoda* are generally very merry ones. At the end of the season a whole evening is devoted to working for the hostess, as a return for the use of her house. During the summer months the village green takes the place of the *Fonoda,* and the national *csárdás* serves in lieu of spinning-wheels, corn-husking and kissing games.

M. Sándor Résö is a great authority on old Hungarian customs, and describes many of these peasant games in his very interesting book on that subject, I am told.

CHAPTER XV

Frogs, nightingales and chestnut avenues—Imperial Tokay—The royal village—Deregnö Castle—A garden cemetery—A Protestant service—The Hungarian language—Hungarian patriotism—The village of Deregnö and its inhabitants.

HAVE you ever listened all night to a frog concert, varied by nightingale solos, with the moon streaming into the room where you lay in bed, and the soft breeze of a spring night wafting in through your windows, that opened on to a gleaming white stone terrace, a dewy breath sweet with the scent of millions of blue violets nestling in the grass under the shade of a magnificent chestnut avenue? If not, you cannot conceive how delicious it is.

It was the end of March when I journeyed up to the wine county of Hungary on a visit to Deregnö, which is not very far from the famous district where the imperial Tokay is grown and made. Most of the Hungarian wines are pretty as well as good, but I think topaz-tinted Tokay surpasses them all, where colour is concerned. It is simply lovely in hue, delicious in flavour, and perfection as a pick-me-up. There are three kinds. *Essenz*—used to give bouquet to other wines, and made entirely from the juice that is pressed out of the ripe grapes by their own weight. *Ausbruch*—made by mixing a certain quantity of the juice that

has been pressed out of fresh grapes artificially, with a thick pulp of grapes that have been permitted to dry on their stalks; and *Mászlás*, which is similarly made, but has a smaller proportion of the pulp used in its manufacture. The best wines are made at *Mézés Mále.* Very little Tokay, however, gets into the foreign markets; it is indeed difficult to buy genuine Tokay in Hungary itself, especially since the ravages of the *Phylloxera*; but there are any number of other brands to be got that are both wholesome, delicious and inexpensive.

The town of Tokay itself nestles lovingly at the foot of the Hegyalja, as the range of vine-clad hills is called, amidst a wilderness of willows. It is quite a picture of sylvan loveliness—from a distance. But it is just this distance that lends enchantment to the view of its brown roofs against their pale grey-green background. On approaching nearer you find that its one long straggling street is dusty, dull and desolate-looking, and its dirty, tumble-down houses nearly all inhabited by Jews, Greeks and Armenians, whose profession in life is that of 'middlemen' between the vine-growers and the wine-buyers. Yet this miserable little town can boast of a glorious past. It once gloried in the proud title of 'the royal village,' and Attila's camp occupied this site. At that period of its existence it was the silent witness of scenes in which a barbaric magnificence was joined to all the splendour, the luxury and the licentiousness of ancient Rome. There is no portion of Magyarland that is without its own peculiar beauty at sunset, but I must admit that the northern districts are undoubtedly lacking in some of the features that fascinate you elsewhere. The exquisite

schemes of colour resulting from the fields of poppies, flax, tobacco, maize and corn of the Alföld, the rich hues of the enormous fruit orchards of the south, and the varied tints of foliage amongst the mountains, are a little wanting in those parts where vineyards stretch for miles and miles in every direction. The immediate neighbourhood of Deregnö is not given up to vine-growing, however, and the whole country around was rendered picturesque by the teams of milk-white oxen dotting the fields, engaged in ploughing, harrowing or other agricultural avocations. There are also large tracts of marsh land rendered vocal by tens of millions of frogs, whilst the coarse grass in the vicinity is filled with chirping locusts, and masses of brown, bushy stalks gleam white with the starry blackthorn blossoms. The castle is a white moorish-looking building with cool, broad terraces looking on to extensive gardens and grounds. In one portion of the garden, close at the back of the bedroom allotted to me, are buried all the dead and gone members of the family for several generations, but their ghosts never came to visit me, though I fervently hoped some of them would; they had lived in such stirring times, and taken part in so much that is now 'history,' that it would have been delightful to get a few 'yarns' out of them. A long avenue led from the house down to the ruins of an old fortress-abode that had been the birthplace of the family centuries ago, and as we paced along it almost daily on our way to gather king-cups and gorgeous red campions on the site of the old castle the Baroness used to tell me tales of bygone days till I felt absolutely 'shivery,' and expected every moment to see processions of ghosts trooping silently down the road in the gathering

twilight. But no; they never were visible. In one of her drawing-rooms stood an immense glass cabinet containing some superb brocade gowns, gold-lace caps, jewelled gloves, shoes and other articles of womanly attire, heirlooms from beautiful women who had gone the way of all flesh. One day we took them out to pack them off to the Countess Andrássy for an exhibition of such relics to be held in Budapest, and I had the temerity to try them on, rather to the horror of the Baroness, who declared that nothing would induce her to do such a thing. But it was vain! No fair spirit came either that night, or any other, to rebuke me for my levity; perhaps because Deregnö is a Protestant village. The church stands just outside the entrance gates and is not by any means a beautiful edifice from an architectural point of view. But the interior was a curious sight on Sundays and saints' days, of which there are so many in Hungary, even for Calvinists and Lutherans. The scene reminded me irresistibly of the pictures we see and the descriptions we read of the old Covenanters. The bare white-washed walls, the minister rolling out sonorous sentences in top-boots and a long black gown, the men on one side, standing with bowed heads to pray, their long hair and beard straggling over the big cloaks fastened across their chests with heavy clasps; the women on the other side equally earnest, wearing equally big cloaks but lacking the general picturesqueness of their shaggy Rembrandtesque husbands and brothers, who might easily have sat as models for the Pilgrim Fathers. I picked Miles Standish out at a glance and found an ideal John Alden in less than a minute. Every person in the church was provided with a

bouquet of blue or white violets which they sniffed incessantly, and their odour filled the whole building, to my delight, since it somewhat overpowered the usual scent of boiled-butter pomade. An ardent admirer of what is called 'congregational singing,' in contradistinction to trained voices, would have a splendid time of it at the Protestant services there. After the sermon the big black-letter hymn-books were opened, the people settled themselves comfortably in their seats, and the good old tune, 'Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott,' was rolled forth. I say 'rolled forth' advisedly, for no other term expresses adequately the result of the fact that they collectively and individually lifted up their voices and sang with all their might and main. They drowned the voice of the organ, they drowned the sound of the rain pouring down upon the roof, and it was only when the hymn had terminated that we discovered how heavy a thunderstorm had been going on for the last ten minutes; then came the benediction, after which they gathered up their hats, wrapped up their prayer-books and trooped out, the men from one door, the women from the other; but no one moved until we had first left the church. It was a sight to see the girls in their gay Sunday garments hurrying and scurrying down the timber-laden streets to their homes with their lace-trimmed handkerchiefs floating in the air, and their stiff, starched petticoats swaying to and fro. They looked like a bed of full-blown poppies agitated by a violently gusty wind.

The Magyar language is most perfectly adapted to oratorical purposes, and I always enjoyed listening to a sermon (when not too long!) even before I could understand the gist of the discourse. It is at one and

the same time forcible, tender, bold, and pathetic; capable of the most impassioned eloquence, the fiercest invective, the most touching appeal. It is, moreover, incredibly rich in idiomatic expressions, and has a vocabulary that seems endless, although it neither possesses a verb *to have* nor yet a gender for the distinction of sexes. In the diversity of its verbal formations, however, it surpasses every other European language, yet it has scarcely any real declension for objective terms. So far as the orthography goes it appears truly awful at first sight, because there is always such a paucity of vowels and such a preponderance of consonants in the majority of the words, but when you have once learned to distinguish between the sounds of the gys, ssz, gyt, zs, sc, ćs, cz, tzs, and a dozen other combinations of consonants, you find it easy enough to spell any word. The difficulty is to pronounce it when spelt. Some of the words are fearful and wonderful to behold. Take, for instance, 'Legellenallhatlanabbaknak-bizyonultak.' Was there ever such a word in any other tongue? It is the mode of grammatical construction that is accountable for their abnormal length. In this wise. Let us take the word *vér*, which is blood, and the word *nö*, which is woman. Now to form the word sister you must take both these and join them together, *növér*. If you wish to say my sister, it is necessary to subjoin the possessive pronoun *em*, when it becomes *növérem*; to make it plural you add the ending *ek*, making *növéremek*. At or by my sisters is *növéremekböl*, and so on, rather in the style of 'The House that Jack built.'

The construction of verbs, which may be called 'the bones and sinews' of any language, is equally peculiar, equally unlike any other European language. To any

one with a taste for philology the Magyar tongue is deeply interesting. The word Magyar itself is of very ancient origin, and it has hitherto baffled the wisest philological heads to discover its precise meaning. In structure it resembles somewhat the Turkish and Finnish tongues; it has changed wonderfully little during the course of centuries, and the Hungarians of to-day speak practically just as their forefathers did when they entered the country a thousand years ago, though of course a good many German, Greek, Latin, and even Slavonian words have been introduced into it, and have thus greatly enriched it. It is the only non-Aryan tongue in Europe, except the Finnish, in which parliamentary debates are carried on and Christian rites celebrated. Another curious feature of this language is that it has never lost its essentially Turanian character or its ancient syntax, in spite of the fact that the Magyars have been established in Europe and subject to Aryan influences for ten centuries. The Latin tongue was for many years, during the periods of Turkish and Austrian rule, the *stataria*, or official language of Hungary. Indeed, until about sixty years ago it was still universally used in all legal, official and political proceedings. The Hungarians generally are not a reading nation. There are no 'penny dreadfuls' in existence and very few cheap editions of anything except Petöfy's lyrics and some of the best-known historical novels. Since the triumphal entry of Arpád and his fierce, wild horsemen in 886, the Magyars have always been noted for their love of freedom and their love of their native land. Dante speaks of the brave inhabitants of Beata Ungaria in the fourteenth century, and Voltaire calls them 'une nation fière et généreuse,

le fléau de ses tyrans et l'appui de ses souverains.' An old mediæval rhyme is still quoted amongst the peasantry and farmers, which runs:

'Extra Hungariam non est vita,
Et si est vita, non est ita.'

A man of some education and plenty of shrewdness once said to me at the end of a conversation on the merits and demerits of our respective countries: 'The gracious Miss has probably observed that the average Magyar is a stiff-necked creature, proud, prejudiced and imbued with two fixed ideas. The first is that the whole world was undoubtedly created expressly for his particular benefit; the second is that the Magyar tongue is the only language in the world worth speaking. In spite of this, however, there are two nations whom we admire enthusiastically—the English, from whom we admit that we have much to learn where politics, commerce, and such things are concerned, and the French. For is not Paris the metropolis of the universe where art and literature are concerned?'

And with this amicable understanding between us we shook hands and bade each other a cordial adieu. The village of Deregnö is inhabited partly by Slavs and partly by Magyars with Italian blood in their veins, who are very easily to be distinguished from each other both by *physique* and costume. The one long broad street of which it consists is cumbered on both sides by unhewn timber 'mellowing' in the sun and rain. At intervals here and there stand the oriental-looking wells that are found in every part of Hungary. They are called *Agds*, and are just the same primitive wells as are still to be found to-day in Persia and Hindostan—this

shows you plainly how very conservative the Magyars are by nature; they are formed by sinking a deep shaft in the soil and enclosing it by a low parapet (generally of tree-trunks or unhewn stones). The water is raised from it by means of a long cross-beam fastened to a pole of equal length, to which a rope (or a chain) and a hook are attached. On this hook everybody attaches his, or her, own jar or bucket, and then tilts it slowly down into the well. When it is full you have only to tilt it slowly up again and—there you are. And these wells have the advantage of lasting for ever without getting out of order apparently too. There is always a well like this near every *csárda*, and you often see a group of shepherds or herdsmen watering their *joszág* at them in a way that reminds you of Isaac, Jacob, and all the Patriarchs, especially in the great plains. Indeed, wherever you meet with the Alfölder he is always the same noble, kindly, half-barbarous sort of being, with an odd mixture of contradictory qualities in him and a distinct aroma of the Old Testament surrounding him.

Magyar Miska has far more poetry in him than the English Hodge, though the latter would probably talk big and sneer in a superior manner at the way of life that thoroughly contents the former. *Bival Jánko*, as they translate John Bull, is a great hand at playing superiority. Do we ever lose the substance in seeking the shadow, I wonder? The Hungarian peasant is not only a born musician, but he is also that most contemptible of beings in the eyes of a prosaic, practical man of business—he is a born poet. Often on winter evenings or in the summer twilight you will see a whole circle crouching round the fire, or lying on the ground wrapped in their sheepskins, listening whilst one of the



HUNGARIAN AGÁS

number improvises verses to some popular melody played by another on a species of wooden pipe called a *telinka*. Scenes like this are no rarity in Hungary, and they always took me back in spirit to the days of mediæval England, to the time when Philip Sidney wrote his 'Arcadia,' when Spenser penned his 'Faëry Queene,' and Chaucer dreamed his 'Dream of Fair Women,' and everybody paid homage to the field-daisy. How seldom we realise what an exquisite production of Nature the 'common daisy' is! Nearly every village in the kingdom is either 'big' something, 'little' something, 'new' something, or 'old' something, or 'St.' something, but Deregnö is simply Deregnö and forms an exception to the general rule. The houses are all snowy with white-wash, have their gables turned towards the street, and wear picturesque thatched roofs that have at least *one* stork's nest on them. During the day these nests are mostly empty except in the hatching season, but towards sunset all the big, graceful, white birds come flying home making their curious call (almost like the creaking of a door), and stand about on one leg anywhere and everywhere in a quaint, confiding manner that always took my fancy immensely. They will feed out of the children's hands, and I have even seen them perched in their usual one-legged position on the backs of sleeping dogs belonging to the family party of the particular cottage under their protection. The same birds return year after year to their old nests, and if a new stork comes to build on your house, or your land, in the spring, you are looked upon as 'a mortal highly favoured of the gods.' There are various delightful superstitions still current amongst these people, Pilgrim Fathers though they be, and many of the old customs

to which they still loyally adhere are decidedly pretty and interesting to a foreigner. The industries to which Deregnö is devoted are the weaving of linens, and coarse damask with coloured borders, on old-fashioned wooden looms that seem to be the chief article of furniture in every cottage; and the making of casks, buckets and wooden jars for the use of the wine-growers in the surrounding neighbourhood. Inside, the walls of the cottages are hung with jugs and plates, some of them heirlooms, and there is a capital collection of this pottery at the castle. It is situated in the county of Zemplén, celebrated not only as the birthplace of the great diplomatist and statesman Count Julius Andrássy, and the equally great patriot Lajos Kossuth, but also as being the biggest county in the kingdom and the one that contains the oldest vineyards; for the famous Hegyalja vineyards are said to have been in existence more than a thousand years. Anyhow, as long ago as the beginning of the thirteenth century, King Béla II. is known to have invited Italians to come over and settle in this district specially to cultivate his vines. Near Sáros-patak, in the same vicinity, there is also the ancient residence of the world-renowned Rákoczys, a structure of great historic interest.

I stayed at Deregnö till the first week in May, and we had lovely weather most of the time. Day after day we were able to drink our coffee and our afternoon tea on the spacious pillared terrace whilst enjoying the scent of the violet-besprinkled lawns and the majestic beauty of long lines of chestnut-trees in full blossom. The garden boasted a very good tennis-ground of stamped earth, on which we often played when the sun was not too glaring.

The Baroness, a young, handsome woman and the mother of three nice little children, was not in the least 'horsey' either in mind, manners, or appearance, but she was nevertheless very fond of riding, a capital judge of horse-flesh and a great authority on horse-breeding. Her husband kept up a fairly large stud and bred a good many horses of various kinds for his own use and for sale. During my visit to them a couple of regimental officers came over to buy for the Government. One of our daily occupations was to visit the stables, after which we generally spent some time watching the animals 'exercising' in the *Reitschule*, and it always amused me to hear my friend discussing breeding technicalities with the stud-groom, who evidently appreciated the opinions of her ladyship highly and had a great respect for her intimate knowledge of the required 'points' in such or such a particular breed.

She was a great admirer of Paul Bourget's books and appreciated Guy de Maupassant too, though personally of a rather puritanical nature; she had just passed through a craze for Japanese furniture and decorations and was, at that precise period, evolving a particular *penchant* for everything *rococo*. Like all her compatriots she is, as you may observe, a curious compound of psychological contrasts that struck me as being eminently interesting and equally lovable. Both she and her husband were the soul of hospitality, and heaped kindnesses on my head to such an extent that I was very loth to leave them when the time came for me to start back on my return to Budapest. Still the best of friends *must* part some time, and one day I was packed into the carriage with half a chicken,

some cream cheese, a few rolls, a chestnut tart, a hunch of cake, a bottle of wine, a bunch of radishes, some quince-jelly and a few candied fruits by way of 'refreshments,' and started off, after many kisses, good wishes and cordial invitations to come again, on my ten miles drive to the station.

CHAPTER XVI

The ice-caverns at Dobsina—Frozen butterflies and brown bears—The town of Dobsina—Cobalt mines—Dante and the ice-grottoes—a Slovák menu—Curious customs.

EARLY in June we left the torrid regions of Budapest to visit one of the marvels of Hungary, the famous ice-caverns of Dobsina, only discovered some ten or fifteen years ago. Long before reaching the actual entrance, you begin to feel an icy breath stealing upon you, and you notice that the rocks and pine-trees round about you are perpetually covered with a thick coating of hoar-frost. A long flight of wooden steps leads you from the upper world into the fairy-like glistening domains of the Ice-maiden, where all sorts of beautiful sights await your expectant eyes. But, beware of entering unless you are well wrapped up, or you will issue from its fascinating precincts merely as a human icicle, for the cold is intense. Moreover, you should never go into these caves unless you are in search of new sensations, possess a clear conscience and are not given to hysterics; otherwise the result may be scarcely satisfactory when you find yourself 'at the centre of the earth' amongst a medley of snowy Titanic corpses lying round as though awaiting a 'ghastly resurrection.' It is then that you will listen curiously to the beating of your own palpitating heart, sounding in the stillness of the stagnating icy air like a huge sledge-hammer

going bang! bang! bang! If you should be tempted to laugh ever so lightly—which, by the way, is scarcely probable—you will certainly regret it, when you hear how the weird, ghostly echoes mock, and mock, and mock at you interminably.

'O mortal! pygmy mortal!' they seem to say, 'what are you, after all? A tiny handful of dusty atoms brought into cohesion by a breath of the Infinite. Learn now thine own insignificance, in the vast and mighty scheme of All That Is.'

In moments like this one is forcibly impressed by the Infinitely Little in ourselves.

As the guide illuminated with his torches the pillars, archways, leaves, flowers, and exquisite traceries in hall after hall, the frozen walls and slippery floors gleaming with a million diamond-flashings, and the magnificent waterfalls turned as by magic into a mass of solid ice, he remarked from time to time, with a complacent air of part-proprietorship:

'Yes, young English lady, this is one of the greatest wonders of Nature. Even in powerful England, where you are all rich "Mylords" you have nothing to equal this. It is one of the things that money cannot buy; but we, though we are poor, have got it nevertheless. The dear God is good to the Magyar nation.'

'You are right,' I answered him softly. If he had only gone away for a single minute I should have dropped on my knees, to worship the beauty and might of it all; but he didn't.

Was it he, or I, who was a nineteenth-century Pagan, a worshipper of idols? Who knows?

For the benefit of scientifically minded people, I ought perhaps to brace up my own unscientific mind

and endeavour to explain the *raison d'être* of these remarkable caverns. The quantity of ice in them is constantly increasing, but this is due, I am told, more to their peculiar formation than to their aspect, or elevation. They are supposed to extend right through the mountains, and are said to be drained by a spring formed entirely from melted ice. The caves all slope in a downward direction; during the winter, therefore, the cold atmosphere penetrates through the narrow entrance and not only hardens the ice already there, but also creates more. In summer, on the contrary, the cold inner air is unable to escape upwards, nor can the warm air penetrate into these icy precincts, consequently the temperature is always kept below freezing-point. There is, however, one remarkable phenomenon connected with these caves which has not yet been satisfactorily explained and accounted for. This is their action on the compass. The disturbing influences are so strong, that the movements of the magnetic needle, when placed horizontally, are entirely hindered, whilst, when held in any other position, it invariably points downwards. Can anybody read me this riddle?

The only remains of living creatures that have ever been found in this ice-grotto are two butterflies, whose dainty, fragile little corpses are frozen on to an icy wall near the entrance; and the bones of some big brown bears which were picked up in the clefts of some of the rocks. How they could have managed to keep *brown* in such an arctic region is more than I can conceive. Polar bears would seem the appropriate animal-denizen for such a world of ice. Indeed, when shivering amongst this scene of weird, unearthly beauty I concluded that it must be rather like the North Pole on a small scale, and I really

felt quite Nansenesque, only, unfortunately, I didn't discover anything, not even a baby seal or an old walrus.

The town of Dobsina itself is tiny, clean, and bright as the proverbial new pin. In the middle of its one long street you may constantly behold a row of women vigorously thumping the dirty linen of their households with stones or blocks of wood, in the little river rushing adown it, over its pebbly bed, just like the graceful Granadinas do near the Retablos at Granada. The hotel of the place is eminently picturesque in situation but scarcely luxurious in its appointments, though scrupulously clean. Behind the town rise dark green rustling pine-woods; behind the pine-woods tower purple mountains absolutely honeycombed with mines of various kinds. The most important of these are the cobalt mines. Silver and nickel are generally found in conjunction with cobalt. The stone in which it is always found is of a pale red-grey colour; a species of very delicate quartz, and a white substance, similar to alabaster, is generally mixed with it, and it has to be sent to Saxony or England to be smelted. It is interesting to trace the chisel-marks for about 350 feet from the entrance, left by the energetic Romans, who worked these particular mines nearly 1,600 years ago. Wandering about in this underground region of ice-caverns and mines, I began to feel as though my imagination had been stimulated to a degree that almost rendered me capable of emulating Dante and writing a sort of nineteenth-century 'Inferno.' Just imagine the soul of a dainty high-born lady caught by a demon (à la Marie Corelli) and imprisoned for ever and ever and aye within a transparent wall of ice like the two poor butterflies that were so pathetic a sight in my eyes. Ugh! The horror of

it! Or imagine the wraith of a strong, lawless man, condemned to prowl as a brown bear for endless ages in dark labyrinths of eternal iciness, yet unable to cool the fires raging within him perpetually.

Each time that I emerge from a subterranean expedition I realise partially the longing that must have filled all Dante's wretched, sin-bound, tortured souls for one momentary breath of 'the sweet air above.' The smile of the sun, the soft kisses of the balmy breezes are never so delicious as when they come to you again after visiting the bowels of the earth. And the grandeur and beauty of those Karpathian pine-forests are things to remember and dream of on dismal foggy days when half the world seems contemplating suicide and the other half is absorbed in money-grubbing. Up amongst those glorious mountains you can almost forget that anything so sordid as filthy lucre exists in the world at all. But you must be content with humble fare. Trout, fresh from one of the many streams that abound, black bread, cheese (made from the milk of sheep and esteemed throughout Hungary), and, to wash these viands down *slivovitza* or a draught of pure spring water. All these you can get at almost any hut or mountain-inn; should you require anything beyond this, you must order it beforehand at 'the big hotel,' where they can get you game, omelettes, or coffee. If you are addicted to tea, be sure you take and *make* your own, otherwise you will get a pale lukewarm beverage that is neither beneficial to the temper nor the digestion.

A social dance amongst the people of this district is a very funny sight, for it is danced by men alone. A number of these long-haired, large-hatted, mild-voiced beings assemble at an inn and partake of *slivovitza* together, but in order to enliven the proceedings, which

might otherwise prove a trifle dull, they take a smelly paraffin lamp, stand it in a wooden bowl and dance wildly round it in a circle. The great point is to kick out your legs over and around this lamp without upsetting it, and the dance goes on until somebody *does* manage to touch it, when they all stop to rest, and he pays the penalty of standing 'drinks round.'

A harmless pursuit if not repeated too often, but scarcely a graceful occupation looked at from an æsthetic point of view. At Christmastide, too, I was told that these poor Slovåks do lots of things that are equally harmless and equally funny to a Western mind. Before sunset on Christmas Eve they strew plenty of straw over the floor of their cottages and then sit upon it. And why? you ask me. Well, in order that their hens should be prolific egg-layers during the coming year. I can't quite see the connection, or follow up their train of reasoning on this matter, though.

They also take an onion for each member of the family and lay it on the table between small bundles of hay and ears of barley tied with red ribbons. This is to ensure plenty of onions, barley, and hay to the household. Then each person takes a plate of beans and runs all round the room with it, touching each wall with a sort of prayerful ejaculation. That is a kind of moral-insurance-policy against fire. Having given their animals a piece of salt to lick—for good luck—they attire themselves in their best bibs and tuckers, sprinkle their marriageable daughters with honey-water so that they may get good, sweet-tempered husbands, and sit down to supper. Then they retire to rest with all speed, knowing that they must be up again in time for the midnight Mass and the Christmas tree, a very important affair in every Hungarian household.

At Easter they go in largely for a particular kind of cake called *paska*. At dawn of day on 'Saint Monday' you see them all hurrying off to church, carrying large flat baskets containing plenty of these cakes, hams, bread, smoked pig-meat, sausages, painted eggs, balls of cheese, and eatables of all descriptions, and bearing in their hands big lighted wax candles. Outside the porch they await the arrival of the priest, who, by the aid of prayer, incense and holy water, consecrates everything to their use for the coming twelve months. On the way home they all salute each other with the greeting, 'Christ is risen!' The reply is, 'He is risen indeed!'

Directly they get home the table is laid for a great feast, and very welcome a decent meal must be to them, for they usually subsist during Lent on a meagre diet of potatoes and cabbage. Nothing would induce these poor things to taste eggs, milk, butter, cheese, or fish, much less meat, during the Lenten Fast.

But before beginning their breakfast the master of the house invariably offers a libation of brandy to: 'the other gods;' though who, what, and where these deities may be, is more than he can tell you. It is just one of those delightful relics of barbarism that are so seldom met with nowadays. When a dead person is carried out of a house to be buried, the other members of the family tap three times on each wall to let them know that he (or she) has gone, and they move all the furniture to different places, and change everything as much as possible, in case the spirit might be tempted to remain there and haunt them. The corpse is also buried with all its most cherished possessions and robed in its best clothes for the same reason.

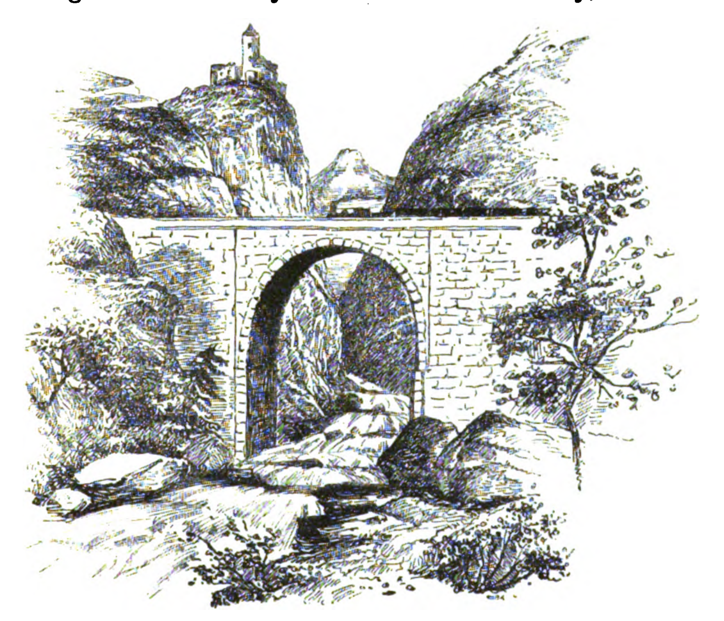
CHAPTER XVII

Tátra-Füred—Alpine delights—A delicious bill of fare—Alpine *flora*—A mountain funeral—Slováks and Slavs—Character of mountaineers—Religion versus piety—Various masculine ideas—A remedy for toothache—Beggar kings and queens—An orphan indeed—A runaway wife—Housekeeping in Hungary—The price of a wife—Slovák courtship—Karpathian heights.

HIGH up in North Hungary, amid the Central Karpathians, under the shadow of the majestic snowy Tátra heights, lies the fascinating little 'bathing-place' of Tátra-Füred. It is the Switzerland of Hungary, but there is something quite different from the Swiss Switzerland in this Alpine district. It is grander, wilder, more awe-inspiring, and though Tátra-Füred, during July and August, is the rendezvous of fashion and frivolity, it is unknown to the ordinary tourist, and has never yet been visited by a 'personally conducted' party, either of 'Cookites' or any other tribe.

When we started for this mountain resort it was the first week in July—not a tepid English July, but a torrid Hungarian fellow (July, I understand, is supposed to belong to the masculine gender), and keeping cool was out of the question for some time after we left Budapest. There are several ways, all equally pleasant, of getting to Tátra-Füred; we chose the Vág Railway, which takes you through a most interesting country,

and gives you magnificent views of the heights, lakes, and valleys of the Karpathians. Some people compare the Vág valley, through which the line runs, to the Rhine valley, but I am not one of those people. Comparisons are odious, sometimes, to my mind. Every height is crowned by a ruined castle certainly, and the



VÁG VALLEY RAILWAY

river winds picturesquely along beside the train, but there is something infinitely more impressive and less like the decorations of a first-class theatre in the Vág valley. This railway is considered a triumph of engineering skill, and cost quite a mint of money, the Minister of the Interior informed me. In fact, he gave

me the exact figures, but, being 'only a woman,' they managed to escape my memory. From time to time we passed charmingly situated watering-places, and peasants in delightful costumes were to be seen driving, riding, walking, and labouring on every hand. Towards evening we reached Csorba, the highest inhabited spot in Hungary. At Popråd we 'disembarked' ourselves and our belongings, and drove the rest of the way along a road that caused me to ejaculate a Spanish proverb, to which I have already alluded. In the province of Granada people remark sententiously, when they are being jogged to death on the back of a mule: 'God made our land, but the Devil made the roads.' Poor Devil! what a lot he is made to answer for! *Füred* means bath, and there are three 'baths' in the Tåtra Mountains. Upper-Füred and New-Füred are about five minutes' distance apart, but Lower-Füred is nearly half-an-hour's walk from the other two. A large hotel, a Hydro, and a Sanatorium are all connected with the Kursaal and winter-gardens by corridors, heated in cold weather. In autumn the world of aristocratic pleasure-seekers gives place to a throng of consumptives and spinal sufferers who go up to spend the winter and spring there. In summer it is the gayest of places. Music, dancing, theatricals, excursions, toilettes, flirtations! One exquisitely dressed feminine personality was even declared to be a Parisian *cocotte* of the first water, but she went away a few days after our arrival, so I had no opportunity of observing the genus from a literary point of view.

The toy-like *chalets* and villas of Tåtra-Füred are deliciously set in a framework of living green and burnished-silver pine and oak forests, interspersed by

lovely little lakes called poetically by the peasants *tengerszeme* (eyes of the sea). The walks and rides in the neighbourhood are a never-ending series of enchanting surprises. Fresh lakes of every size, shape, and colour—red, white, green, black, blue, yellow ; and flowers, ferns, and mosses not to be found elsewhere. Game abounds, too. Polecats and marmots are found high up, besides bears, wolves, chamois, roebuck, golden eagles, and vultures. Lots of the streams are full of beautiful pink-speckled trout and grayling. Did ever wild strawberries and raspberries taste better than those served to us at almost every meal! Then the *menu* at dinner and supper! It makes my mouth water to think of it now, though I am neither a *gourmand* nor a *gourmet*. Just listen! Auerhahn soup, red-deer venison served with cranberry sauce, Kaiservogel with sorrel salad, and all sorts of funny little birds stuffed with truffles and *foie gras*, not to mention cheese soufflée and delicately fried fish of various kinds. Of course, you could have plain beef and mutton if you preferred, but who *would* prefer prose when there's plenty of poetry to be had instead? Mountains make people poetical, even where eating is concerned.

Amongst the flowers indigenous to the Tátra alone, I believe, are the *Campanula Carpatica*, the *Avena Carpatica*, the *Saxifraga hieracifolia*, and the *Dianthus nitidus*. People, in many parts of Europe, are under the impression that the *Edelweiss* does not flourish on the Karpathians, but this is a mistake. In some parts it grows very luxuriantly. I gathered several magnificent starry blossoms at various times, and took away with me a root planted in a pot of pine-bark, manufactured for it specially by my favourite guide, who used

to say, by the way: 'The gracious English Miss climbs about our rocky mountains as nimbly as a Karpathian chamois!' Wasn't it sweet of him? I appreciate compliments like that at their full value.

There are no genuine glaciers in the Tátra district, though vast fields of frozen snow glisten in the brilliant sunshine on fine days. The mists, too, are charming; full of magic and mystery. How they roll and surge, clear away and return, producing all sorts of exquisite effects. Of course it rains there occasionally, but if you are a real mountain lover, you won't mind that—when you are prepared for it.

Should you be an enthusiastic climber, do not let anyone dissuade you from making an expedition to the Five Lakes, on the back of a sturdy little horse, who will perversely insist on keeping you in a continual state of agitation for the first hour or so by going to the very edge of every precipice, even when there is plenty of room, comparatively speaking, on the path. But as soon as you can make up your mind to trust him, you will begin to enjoy the sensation, and your trust will not be misplaced. If you were born under a lucky star you will probably have the melancholy pleasure of witnessing a mountain funeral some day in your wanderings. It is a curiously pathetic sight. A coffin painted showily in white and gold, covered with wild flowers, and laid on a rough bier, drawn slowly, and with many jars and jolts, by a team of milk-white oxen, who are followed closely by throngs of peasants in their picturesque attire, alternately singing melodious Slovák hymns and enumerating in wailing voices, rather in the fashion practised at an Irish wake, the good qualities of the deceased person whom they are escorting to his last

resting-place. I have occasionally watched a funeral *cortège* for a couple of hours, zigzagging with bare-footed sureness down the winding path, in and out amongst the pine-trees. The effect of the wails borne to the listening ear by the breeze on a summer's evening is weird, and the artistic value of the procession is vastly enhanced when closely followed, as it often is, by a convoy of long waggons laden with char-coal, and driven by sad-looking, silent, large-hatted Slovåks. The numberless excursions to be made from Tåtra-Füred fill several weeks, and many of them are of the kind that require strength of nerve as well as strength of limb; but there is nothing more enjoyable from the point of view of a man or woman possessing average health, courage, and a genuine love for moun-tains than a summer spent in the Karpathians. The scenery must be known to be fully appreciated. The grandeur and beauty of those seemingly everlasting pine-forests are utterly indescribable.

The Slovåks inhabiting these north-west districts of Hungary aré a very different people to the Slavs in the south, though as a matter of fact they belong to the same race. The former claim to be the direct descend-ants of the Moravian Czéchs. The men are quiet, pensive-looking creatures, wearing their long golden hair either in ringlets or plaited into several 'pigtails' down their slender shoulders; their eyes are mild in expression and blue in colour, and not even the fierce-looking, dagger-like knives stuck ostentatiously into their broad, embroidered leathern belts can redeem the effeminacy of their appearance, though their enormous flapping felt hats are rather like the *sombrero* of a Mexican brigand. The women are gentle, submissive,

industrious beings, plain of feature and rather wanting in all that is generally held to be womanly charm, but good-hearted and patient in a wonderful degree. These



SLOVÁK PEASANTS

people interested me deeply. The peasant idea of religion seems to resolve itself there into something like this. The dear Lord God Almighty is, after all, not so

severe as He is said to be, nor the poor Mr. Devil quite so black as he is generally painted, and if a fellow does no harm to his neighbours, and is kind to women, children, and weak things of that kind, he won't find himself far wrong at the final day of reckoning. This is more human than orthodox, perhaps, but it has a certain poetic value of its own undoubtedly that bears fruit amongst them. They have no books except their big prayer-books, no ambitions, no ideals, very few conscious thoughts, yet there is somehow a strain of innate idealism running through their daily lives. They toil unmurmuringly and unremittingly for the hunch of black bread, the sip of brandy, the bowl of *czibere*, and the rude wooden roof that shelters them from the inclemencies of the weather; yet they love the rugged mountains and the sequestered valleys of their Karpathian homes better than any flat, fertile plains. They understand, too, the beauty of love, patience, and faith; they do not forget to practise the virtues of mutual help, of hospitality to strangers; and when the church bell rings out thin and clear through the misty wreaths or the clear crystal atmosphere of their hill-bound homes, they trudge off cheerfully together, wending their way, often a long and rugged one, to the sanctuaries set up for the worship of the 'dear Lord God,' who is a sort of fatherly personality to them from the moment they can understand anything about religion. Then, when the end draws near, each one lies down resignedly to die, gazing with perfect faith upon a patient figure roughly carved upon a crucifix, probably by some member of the family, from a pine log cut from a tree that had been shattered in the forest by the wilful wildness of a howling blizzard.

Everywhere in Hungary I was struck by the fact that you find so little *piety* and so much *religion*, to use what seems rather a paradoxical phrase.

Sunday after Sunday, unlettered multitudes patter prayers only vaguely understood, and listen respectfully to sermons from parish priests almost as ignorant as themselves. All the week they work and play, love and laugh, sigh and sing, dance and drink, and live in no great awe of God, and with a sort of sneaking regard for the devil as a rather hardly-used personage. When death robs them of their friends, it is the most natural thing in the world to them to save up a few guldens to enable them to appeal to the human tenderness of the Holy Mother not to let it go hard with the soul that has passed away.

'To err is human, to forgive divine'

is the almost unconscious sentiment of their hearts.

It made me think often of the faith that shall remove mountains. That there could possibly exist any such anomalies as 'fanes of fruitless prayer' seems a contingency that never enters the mind of the Hungarian peasant, be he Protestant or Catholic, Jew or Greek.

Amongst the upper classes, however, it is somewhat different. The majority of them claim to be considered 'good Catholics,' or 'pious Protestants,' and it is usually considered necessary for the feminine element to attend Mass regularly; for, as one man of birth and culture explained to me, almost in the words of the poet Heinrich Heine,

'Eine Frau ohne Religion
Ist wie eine Blume ohne Geruch.'

For a man, however, such outward evidences of piety

are not considered necessary, nor has his religion anything whatever to do with his moral character. A mere detail, such as being in the habit of making any number of informal marriages or anything of that sort, does not in any way militate against his reputation as a strictly religious man, provided he goes to daily Mass; nor *vice versa*.

Another man of my acquaintance, equally well-born and equally cultured, once paraphrased this same quotation from Heine into

> 'A woman without a spice of the devil in her
> Is like a beautiful flower without scent,'

and went on to assure me that if there is one thing more than another that is sure to bore a man in the long run, it is the possession by his wife of the so-called 'angelic' qualities, as was evidenced even in the Garden of Eden, for Adam stuck to his erring womanly Eve, though he had forsaken his angelic, faultless Lilith. This is a comforting doctrine for most of us who do not aspire to being angels; in this world, at all events. Hungary has also her infidels and her freethinkers, but they are greatly in the minority there.

A very brilliant star in the scientific world spent nearly two whole hours upon one occasion trying to convince me that Christ could be nothing more nor less than the illegitimate son of a Jewish maiden and a village carpenter, who started the divinity theory as a cloak for their own embarrassment; whilst a clever University professor endeavoured to convert me to Positivism; and a young LL.D. did his best to bring me round to Unitarianism. A great many of the better-class Jews hold pretty much the same tenets as the

epicureans of old: 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow you die, and death is annihilation.'

Yet Hungarians of the male sex do not disdain to believe all sorts of superstitions that appear to us childish. I quite lost the esteem of an able man, once a popular and successful Cabinet Minister, by laughing at his remedy for toothache, from which at that moment I happened to be suffering.

'If you cut your finger-nails regularly every Friday you will never be troubled with it,' he said gravely and sympathetically. 'After being troubled with it for years I adopted this plan, and have never suffered since.' The idea was comical, and thinking he was only making a joke I laughed. He never forgave me that laugh. This same man has not been inside a church for years, is not by any means a pleasant or good-tempered husband, and yet takes off his hat reverently whenever he passes a wayside crucifix or meets the Host on its way to a death-bed.

But then, as I said before, Hungary is a country of contrasts.

There are, by the way, no workhouses in Hungary, nor any parish relief or poor rates, but there is an organised system of beggary that answers pretty much the same purpose, and yet permits the recipients of charity to live as they will, and where they will.

Has it ever struck anyone that it would be rather interesting to discover how, and at what precise period of our national history, poverty first came to be regarded as a crime, I wonder?

All over Hungary, in each town, village and hamlet, the poor of the district choose a king and queen from amongst their numbers, whose duty it is to apportion

the begging-districts, receive and divide the money collected, and settle any disputes that may arise upon any point that concerns them as a community; beyond that he has no jurisdiction over his subjects. In his private capacity each beggar may live as he or she likes, and quarrel as much as he or she chooses. Friday is the regulation day for begging, and each person has a certain number of houses to call at, where each is accustomed to receive a certain small sum varying from a single kreutzer upwards. The big houses naturally get a larger percentage of beggars and bestow larger coins than the smaller ones, and cottagers often pay their quota in kind, instead of coin. These alms are always given with the ejaculation: 'For the sake of Jesus Christ;' and they are gratefully received and fervently thanked for, 'In the name of Jesus Christ.'

Certain of the beggars are deputed to beg outside the church-doors; others beg on particular saints'-days. In the country villages all those bearing your own Christian name call on that day to offer you congratulations, which are always acknowledged by a small gratuity. Then there is the village idiot, who may beg anywhere at any time in consideration of his want of sense.

But besides these 'beggars' there are, as everywhere, 'disreputables' who are helped for the sake of their families, regular pensioners, who are clothed and fed at the expense of the lord of the manor, sick folk who ask for temporary help, and orphans who are maintained through parish subscriptions, and distributed in the cottages of the peasants to be 'mothered.'

One of these orphans who came daily to take his

meals in the kitchens of a castle where I spent several months, in the west of Hungary, aroused my pity. When he was three years old his mother killed her husband in an access of jealousy, and expiated her crime upon the scaffold, so the Countess took him under her protection, and he lived with an old family servant on the outskirts of the village. I wondered if any of his school-mates had ever twitted him with his mother's fate. Poor little bright-eyed, brown-haired chap; he was like her, they told me, and she had been a rustic beauty. Poor girl! She was not quite twenty when they hanged her.

One of the scullery-maids there was an object of charity too. In Hungary every girl has a dower, however poor her people may be, and these dowries generally have a lot to do in the settlement of marriages. Tinka's father had promised to give his daughter a dowry of twenty-five florins besides the household linen, feather beds, pigs and poultry that are always expected; but after the ceremony was over he found he could only spare ten florins. Now this was a great blow to the parents-in-law, who considered it a most dishonourable breach of contract, and they visited their displeasure on the head of the unoffending young wife. She and her husband, by the bye, were each in love with somebody else. This marriage had not been of their seeking; therefore they agreed to part, but when Tinka reached home her people refused to shelter the runaway. She, on the other hand, refused to go back to her mother-in-law, so the sixteen-year-old bride found herself homeless and penniless in five weeks after her marriage. As a matter of course, she came to 'the big house' for advice and assistance, and was

at once given a place in the kitchens. I admired Tinka immensely. She was that rarity, a blonde Magyar, with big dancing blue eyes, thick coils of golden hair, and the shyest, quietest ways imaginable—not the least bit like a runaway wife.

The mistress of a large household in Hungary has need to be a very capable housewife, for she is cumbered with many cares. You must boil your own soap, mould your own candles, dry your own prunes, prepare your own candied fruits, smoke your own sausages, cure your own hams, bottle your own compôtes, make your own vinegar, store your own fruits and vegetables, butter and cheese for winter use, grind your own maize for culinary purposes, grow your own wine, act as your own butcher and poulterer, laundress and sempstress. The eye of the mistress must be everywhere, even though she invariably has a housekeeper under her. Servants get much smaller wages, work harder. and live less comfortably, but they are very undependable, and there is absolutely no standard of personal morality amongst them. There is always an undercurrent of *galanterie* going on between the men and the maids, ending occasionally in tragedy, though more often in indifference.

It amused me rather to find that marriageable girls are always spoken of as 'saleable daughters' (*élado leanyok*), eligible bachelors as 'purchasing young men' (*völegény*), because a bridegroom-elect is supposed to pay his prospective father-in-law a price (real amongst the peasantry, fictitious in other classes) for the honour of marrying into his family.

A wife costs the Magyar peasant anything between 20 florins and 200 florins, but she is cheap at any price,

I can assure you. However coquettish and flirting she may have been during her brief girlhood, she usually settles down after marriage into a hardworking, careful woman, a loyal wife, and a devoted mother. Usually, I say—not always, of course.

The best man is sent round before a wedding to invite all the neighbourhood in a set speech which runs: 'Most humbly do I beg you to pardon my intrusion under your roof (here follow doffings of hats and bows), but I am deputed by So and So and his wife to politely invite you and your family to partake of a morsel of food, and drink a glass of wine, and to dance a measure afterwards on the occasion of the wedding-feast of the seed that has grown up beneath their wings. *Please bring with you knives, forks, and plates.*'

This invitation is couched in the same terms more or less everywhere, and delivered with similar formalities, but the ceremonies in connection with courtship and marriage differ in different parts of the country, each nationality loyally maintaining its own peculiar manners and customs. Amongst the Slováks a proposal is a very solemn poetical kind of thing. The whole of the business transactions having been arranged beforehand by a third party, the suitor and his best man, called the *staro sta*, present themselves at the cottage door on a Saturday night and inform the inmates that they have lost their way, and are out in search of a star (on the king's behalf), whereupon the girl gets up and leaves the room. The *staro sta* then says: 'That is the star we are looking for; will you permit us to go in search of her?' He goes on with a long speech about Adam and Eve, during which flowers are distributed and everybody decks him or herself, and

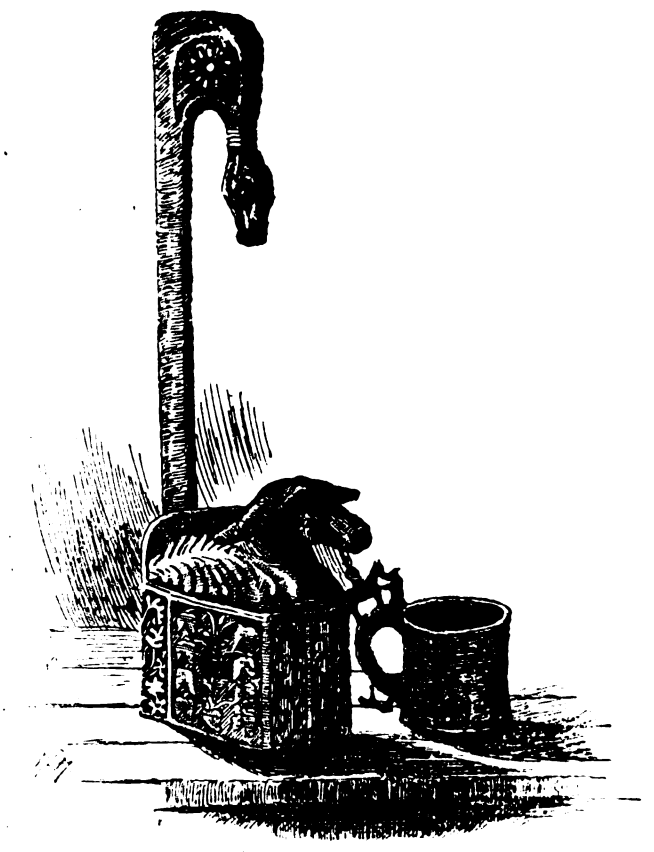
finally the maid is called to come back, and asked if she will accept the suitor who offers himself. Naturally she says: Yes; because she and he have already plighted their troth to each other through her window on moonlight nights; and the function concludes with more elaborate speeches, clinking of glasses, drinking of *slivovitza*, and binding the hands of the happy pair together with a handkerchief.

The most curious ceremony of all, however, is the 'Cake dance,' which takes place the night before the wedding, and ends by a scene of tears, sobs, and general embracings. After this they have supper, and every guest puts a small coin in a basin towards the expenses of the wedding festivities, that last two days. The actual marriage rites are of a very tedious and long-winded nature, but, once over, they usually last for ever, since divorce is almost unknown amongst them.

They are by habit a frugal race, addicted to strange and fearful culinary compounds. The favourite form of breakfast is a bowl of *czibere*. This consists of water which has been soured by steeping stale bits of black bread in it for about three weeks, manufactured into a species of soup by adding beaten eggs and sheep's milk to it. Not exactly an appetising food according to our notions.

Though not given to drunkenness, the Slovák does manage to get through a fair proportion of *slivovitza*, with the help of his wife and family. This beverage is a spirit distilled from plums, and is really a very palatable form of *eau de vie*. In travelling about amongst the Slovák population it is necessary to be prepared for frugal fare. Trout caught in the mountain streams and fried in butter is not to be despised by

anybody when it is available; on other occasions, though, it is often needful to be content with black bread,



SHEPHERD'S CROOK. SALT BOX AND MUG

sheep's-milk cheese, goose's eggs, and the aforesaid brandy. Not exactly an extensive menu. The different elevations of the Karpathian heights can almost

be gauged at a glance from the nature of the trees clothing them. The valleys and the lower reaches of hills present to view yew-trees, and various kinds of the more delicate conifers ; higher up these are replaced by a yellow species of pine, interspersed with larch, spruce and sometimes birch, the trunks often covered with lichens or fringes of lovely red-brown mosses; above this you get belts of enormous pines that look almost black against the sky ; still higher come stunted firs, and junipers, and then, the everlasting diadem of snow crowning the highest peaks.

CHAPTER XVIII

Somogy-megye—The majolica and faïence factory at Pécs—Wild-boar hunting—A precocious baby—Wild ducks and herons—Snow-storms—Planting fir-trees—Farewell to Hungary—*Eljén Magyarland!*

SOME of the most beautiful earthenware, majolica and hand-painted china, in the world is made at Pécs in Somogy-megye, one of the southern counties of Hungary. I am the proud possessor of a tea-set given to me by the dear old Countess R—— that is quite a work of art. The *pâte* itself is almost as thin and transparent as an egg-shell, whilst the sprays of flowers painted on it are of the daintiest and most delicate description; and a set of dessert plates painted with peasant-scenes is a source of admiration to everyone who sees them. Knowing the interest of those Pécs factories, therefore, I was quite charmed to receive an invitation to go and spend a couple of months within driving distance of 'the potteries,' and arranged to leave Szt. Mihály and the delights of boar-hunting in the middle of October.

It is no exaggeration to say that the Transylvanian forests literally swarm with wild boars in the autumn; indeed, so destructive are they to the maize crops that the fields bordering on the forest have to be patrolled all night long until the corn has been harvested. Several times we went out about midnight to 'pot' baby boars and thus diminish the stock for the following season. It

was a picturesque sight to drive along the road and see the watch-fires of the men on guard blazing at intervals along the confines of the forest-land. The flames rose and fell against a background of dark-green trees, and in the flickering glow stalwart figures could be seen pacing up and down. We were stationed generally at one particular corner furthest from the road. Presently the fires were allowed to burn low and no one moved or spoke above a whisper, and gradually out of the dark shadows behind us came a faint grunt, grunt, grunt! On one occasion these sounds developed themselves into a sight most beautiful to the eye of a sportsman, most exciting to the mind of a modern Englishwoman, viz. a porcine mother and ten small progeny. On she came in front, gazed cautiously round, and, seeing no one, ventured out of the sheltering forest depths to feed her family on the tempting maize before her. As soon as they got well into the field, bing, bang! bing, bang! went four guns, and three babies gave up the ghost with a startled cry. The distracted mother, who aroused pity in my heart, whirled wildly round with shrieks of affrighted agony, and dashed off back into the forest, calling piteously to her offspring to follow and be saved. When the three little porcine corpses were brought up and laid down beside us, I could not help stroking their little snouts regretfully. Even a wild boar is a pretty creature in its infancy, and how could the poor mites know that thieving and trespassing is a mortal sin—sometimes? Later on we went out hunting in the regulation way, which is less picturesque but more sportsmanlike. About ten in the morning we mounted our steeds and set off to ride some distance into the heart of the magnificent forest. There we dismounted and left the horses

in the care of several grooms whilst we went some distance further on foot. Then we separated into couples and took up the respective positions allotted to us. My companion and I seated ourselves on what proved to be an extremely damp mossy bank, and conversed for a while until we heard in the far distance faint cries. By degrees these increased in strength and volume till at last you might have said: 'Another Wallach rising!' But no! These were only an army of beaters, and now we began to listen breathlessly. There was a crackling amongst the underwood, a low double-bass Umph! umph! that sent the blood to our hearts, and then suddenly across the green glade-like 'drive' dashed a big, brown, ugly brute with great tusks; flakes of foam were dropping from his hideous maw. There was the crack of a rifle; still his career was not stopped. Another bang; he dropped, struggled convulsively and tried to rise, larding the earth round him with white streams from his mouth and grunting ferociously. But the next shot quieted him. His head dropped and two couples rushed simultaneously forward to 'stick' him. We reached him first, and as the dagger-like knife slashed his throat I turned away feeling sick with disgust. I detest the very sight of anything gory, and the smell of warm blood sickens me; yet nothing would have induced me to 'give myself away' by admitting such weakness of character. I went out to Hungary with the full determination of doing everything and seeing everything, and I kept strictly to my principles; and the next time I go there, if circumstances permit me to hunt wild boars or kill bears, I shall not hesitate to do so again in spite of my disgust for 'blugginess' of all descriptions. Why? is more than I am able to explain even to myself.

Leaving the rest of the party to continue their sport and feast on boar's head at frequent intervals, varied by boar's meat served hot with scraped horse-radish and a delicious sauce made from the berries of the wild rose, I set off early one morning for Budapest, reached it in the evening very tired, spent the night at the town-house of the Countess R——, and went off again about eight o'clock the next morning past Lake Balaton and through the surrounding vine country to Kaposvár in Somogy-megye. It was a long, wearying journey, and night had fallen long before the train put me down at a quiet little roadside station far away from any village or homestead. A carriage drawn by a pair of splendid horses was waiting, and we drove off down a long, straight, muddy road between rows of shivering poplars, whilst a glorious moon rose slowly into the sky and brought into view large white villages, where nearly every house had at least *one* chimney and was built of brick or stone. This was quite a change after Transylvania and Wallach huts; however, a few thatched cottages here and there relieved the unpicturesqueness of slate roofs and square chimneys, whilst the clumps of fir-trees dotted about in patches over the level landscape formed a dark background that was very effective. The *kastely* was, as usual, a one-storied building forming a sort of hollow square, with many green-shuttered windows and one vast wilderness of a store-room stretching along under the brown-tiled roof. The rooms all opened into each other and out into long stone corridors. Between these doors were big oven-doors that opened into stoves where huge fires were made to heat the rooms, from the outside. In every Hungarian household there is a stoker, whose business it is

to keep these fires going and carry logs of wood in as fuel. Another is kept busy chopping these logs, and a third one stacks them in the wood-house. The number of in- and out-door servants of this sort necessary in Hungary surprises you very much until you get used to things and find out the whole system of work and wages.

The *kastely* was a comfortable roomy place, and my hostess prided herself on her housekeeping. She had two of the sweetest little daughters imaginable. The elder one, Misa, though only three years old, could sing dozens of folk-songs taught her by one of the undernurses, and was altogether a most amusing and precocious young person. She spoke German and Hungarian in tiny clear accents and danced the *csárdás* delightfully. She always spoke of herself as *szép Misa, i.e.* beautiful Misa, and she was certainly not far wrong in her own estimate of her personal charms. Her mother, who was about thirty-two or thirty-three, had been a beauty, but she was one of those people who are unfortunate enough to grow old early. Her father was a tall, stalwart, good-looking man and a splendid specimen of an honest, upright, country gentleman. They both welcomed me cordially, and after partaking of an excellent meal I was glad to be allowed to go straight away to bed and sleep off the fatigue of my long journey late into the next day. Travelling more than 300 miles in a train that bumps and scrunches and lags along is distinctly a tiring process. The railway fares in Hungary since the introduction of the zone-system of railways are fabulously cheap. My fare, first-class the whole way, was under twenty florins, though I cannot recollect the exact amount.

Shooting parties were of course the order of the day, and I developed great enthusiasm for certain kinds of sport; so much so, that the head gamekeeper used always to enquire affectionately after 'the honourable English Miss' whenever I omitted to join the ranks of the 'shooters.' Not that my fingers ever pulled a trigger, but I just looked on and applauded. Wild ducks and herons were our favourite game, but we also brought home plenty of snipe, any amount of hares, and a fair supply of pheasants, partridges, and various other birds. It was very pleasant too to ramble home through pine-woods in the twilight and listen to the cry of the cock-pheasants as they flew up to roost in the branches. Often we added a couple of foxes to the 'bag,' but national prejudices invariably made me feel rather ashamed of that performance. The roads round that district were particularly broad and mostly level, but *such* mud as you saw there after rain is inconceivable to an English mind. It was literally half a yard deep, and it was impossible to even cross the village street on foot.

In the fields it was sticky but bearable, though I felt obliged to wear goloshes even there, and to fasten them on over the instep by stout elastics. At the beginning of December we had the pleasure of passing through a regular blizzard that lasted three whole days. When it ceased the whole world was buried in snow. The roads were blocked, the line was blocked, everything was blocked, and we got neither letters nor newspapers for nearly a week. After the storm, it began to freeze, and went on freezing from then till the beginning of March. Then it thawed, and a couple of days later the violets were in blossom.

It was most interesting to see the whole village turn out with spades and follow in the wake of the snow-plough digging a pathway through it and leaving high walls on both sides. Every parish is compelled to clear its own roads for traffic within a certain given time, and as the roadway is only made broad enough for one sledge, a species of 'backwater' is contrived at stated intervals, where vehicles are able to shunt off and thus pass each other. I used to love driving out over these hard shiny paths between the snowy ramparts behind a pair of fleet, frisky horses decorated with silvery, tinkling bells.

The snow was frozen so hard that you could walk on the top of it with impunity, and we often went out attired in full short serge skirts, felt stockings and high snow-shoes, and tramped for hours over the fields and through the crystallised woods, carrying maize to strew under the quaint shelters erected for the benefit of the game.

How lovely those woods were on a sunny day with the thermometer below zero! These pine-plantations, by the way, have a history of their own. Years ago they were tracts of sand that not only refused to grow anything themselves, but also prevented the land round them from doing much good by scattering themselves over everything whenever the wind blew; so some acute man planted his tract with firs and pines. They grew and throve. His example was followed, and the country is becoming more fertile, better wooded and more picturesque every year. About the end of October we went out and helped to plant a new wood on a distant part of the estate. It had rained hard for two days and the ground was well saturated. Cartloads of tiny

trees were dug up from the 'tree-school' and brought down there, where the bailiff delivered them over to scores of girls and women, who planted them in rows across by making holes with a pointed stick, popping in the little tree and treading it round with their bare feet. We were also provided with sticks and bundles of trees, but we did not work very long at it. Tree-planting *looks* idyllic, but it is rather back-achy in reality. I stayed on and on there all the winter, and we used to skate daily on a large lake in the beautiful old garden full of the finest trees and the choicest shrubs. During March and April it was a great amusement to me to watch the gradual coming to life of the frog-army in this lake. Some of the old frog ladies were such ugly, harsh-croaking horrors too, but the little ones are perfect darlings. One spring day under the trees on the outskirts of the park we found a tiny baby-hare. How it got there was a mystery, so after waiting some while to see whether its mother would come and fetch it, we took it into the house and fed it. However, the next day it was shown to the children, and Misa, in an ecstasy of passionate affection, squeezed all the breath out of the little furry thing's body.

The woods and banks were full of flowers by the time I packed up my belongings and set off on my return journey to old England. It seems unnatural to admit such a thing, but I really felt on leaving Hungary as though I were leaving my own country to expatriate myself in our tight little island. So much cordial kindness, so much hospitality, so much warm affection had been lavished on me by the Hungarians that my heart had gone out to the whole nation and I was loth to leave their shores. Not if I should live to be a

hundred can I ever forget the years spent amongst them, or cease to feel grateful to a country and people who took me to their hearts when my own was sick and sore, and sent me home again a happier, a healthier, and a wiser woman.

Therefore, let me end this book by an exclamation that every Hungarian patriot will re-echo. *Eljén Magyarland!*

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